EXTREMAL METRICS FOR THE Q'-CURVATURE IN THREE DIMENSIONS

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ABSTRACT. We construct contact forms with constant Q'-curvature on compact three-dimensional CR manifolds which admit a pseudo-Einstein contact form and satisfy some natural positivity conditions. These contact forms are obtained by minimizing the CR analogue of the II-functional from conformal geometry. Two crucial steps are to show that the P'-operator can be regarded as an elliptic pseudodifferential operator and to compute the leading order terms of the asymptotic expansion of the Green's function for $\sqrt{P'}$.

1. Introduction

The geometry of CR manifolds is studied via a choice of contact form and the induced Levi form. A natural question is whether there are preferred choices of contact form. One such choice is a CR Yamabe contact form, which has the property that the pseudohermitian scalar curvature is constant. Such contact forms exist on all compact CR manifolds [10, 13, 14, 24, 26]. Another such choice is a pseudo-Einstein contact form with constant Q'-curvature [6, 18]. The primary goal of this article is to show that the latter class of contact forms always exist in dimension three under natural positivity assumptions.

The idea of the Q'-curvature arose in the work of Branson, Fontana and Morpurgo [4] on Moser–Trudinger and Beckner–Onofri inequalities on the CR spheres. On any even-dimensional Riemannian manifold (M^n, g), the critical GJMS operator P_n is a conformally covariant differential operator P_n with leading order term $(-\Delta)^{n/2}$ which controls the behavior of the critical Q-curvature Q_n within a conformal class (cf. [3]). Specializing to the case of the standard n-sphere (S^n, g_0) in even dimensions, Beckner [1] and, via different techniques, Chang and the third-named author [8], used these objects to establish the Beckner–Onofri inequality:

$$\int_{S^n} w\, P_n w + 2\int_{S^n} Q_n w - \frac{2}{n}\left(\int_{S^n} Q_n\right)\log \fint_{S^n} e^{nw} \geq 0 \tag{1.1}$$

for all $w \in W^{n/2,2}$ and for Q_n an explicit (nonzero) dimensional constant. Moreover, equality holds in (1.1) if and only if $e^{2w}g_0$ is Einstein, or equivalently, if and only if $e^{2w}g_0 = \Phi^* g_0$ for Φ an element of the conformal transformation group of S^n.

Branson, Fontana and Morpurgo investigated to what extent the above discussion holds on the standard CR spheres $(S^{2n+1}, T^{1,0}S^{2n+1}, \theta_0)$. While it has long been known that there is a CR covariant operator P_n with leading order term $(-\Delta_b)^{n+1}$, this operator has an infinite-dimensional kernel, namely the space $\mathcal{P}$ of

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CR pluriharmonic functions [15]. For this reason one does not expect P_n to give rise to a CR analogue of the sharp Beckner–Onofri inequality (1.1). Instead, Branson, Fontana and Morpurgo [4] observed that there is another operator P_n', defined only on $\mathcal{P}$, with all of the desired properties. That is, P_n' has leading term $(-\Delta_b)^{n+1}$, is CR covariant, and there is a (nonzero) dimensional constant Q_n' such that

$$\int_{S^{2n+1}} w\, P_n' w + 2\int_{S^{2n+1}} Q_n' w - \frac{2}{n+1}\left(\int_{S^{2n+1}} Q_n'\right)\log \fint_{S^{2n+1}} e^{(n+1)w} \geq 0 \tag{1.2}$$

for all $w \in W^{n+1,2}\cap\mathcal{P}$. Moreover, equality holds in (1.2) if and only if $e^{2w}\theta_0$ is pseudo-Einstein and torsion-free, or equivalently, if and only if $e^{2w}\theta_0 = \Phi^*\theta_0$ for Φ a CR automorphism of $(S^{2n+1}, T^{1,0}S^{2n+1})$.

In light of (1.1), it is natural to seek metrics of constant Q-curvature within a given conformal class on an even-dimensional Riemannian manifold. This question has been intensively studied in four dimensions. In particular, Chang and the third-named author [8] showed that on any compact Riemannian four-manifold (M^4, g) for which the Paneitz operator P_4 is nonnegative with trivial kernel and for which $\int Q_4 < 16\pi^2$, one can construct a metric $\hat{g} := e^{2w}g$ for which $\hat{Q}_4$ is constant by minimizing the functional

$$II(w) := \int_M w\, P_4 w + 2\int_M Q_4 w - \frac{1}{2}\left(\int_M Q_4\right)\log\fint_M e^{4w}.$$

This construction, and various modifications of it, have played an important role in studying the geometry of four-manifolds; see [7] for further discussion.

The purpose of this article is to show that one can similarly construct contact forms with constant Q'-curvature on a compact three-dimensional CR manifold under natural positivity assumptions. To explain this, let us first recall the essential features of the Q'-curvature [6]. On any pseudohermitian three-manifold $(M^3, T^{1,0}M, \theta)$, there is a differential operator $P_4' \colon \mathcal{P} \to C^\infty(M)$ defined on the space $\mathcal{P}$ of CR pluriharmonic functions with the properties that P_4' has leading term Δ_b^2, is symmetric in the sense that the pairing $(u,v) \mapsto \int u\, P_4' v$ is symmetric on $\mathcal{P}$, and satisfies the transformation formula

$$e^{2w}\hat{P}_4'(u) = P_4'(u) \mod \mathcal{P}^\perp \tag{1.3}$$

for all $u \in \mathcal{P}$, where $w \in C^\infty(M)$ and $\hat{P}_4'$ is defined in terms of $\hat{\theta} = e^w\theta$. The analytic properties of the P'-operator are improved by projecting onto $\mathcal{P}$. As we will see, if $\tau \colon C^\infty(M) \to \mathcal{P}$ is the orthogonal projection, then the operator $\overline{P}_4' := \tau P_4' \colon \mathcal{P} \to \mathcal{P}$ is a formally self-adjoint elliptic pseudodifferential operator.

In general, one cannot associate an analogue of the Q-curvature to P_4'. However, one can do so when restricting to pseudo-Einstein contact forms. A contact form θ on $(M^3, T^{1,0}M)$ is pseudo-Einstein if its scalar curvature R and torsion A_{11} satisfy the relation $\nabla_1 R = i\nabla^1 A_{11}$. This is equivalent to requiring that θ is locally volume-normalized with respect to a nonvanishing closed $(2,0)$-form [17]; such contact forms always exist on boundaries of domains in $\mathbb{C}^2$ [11]. For pseudo-Einstein contact forms, one can define a scalar invariant Q_4' which satisfies a simple transformation rule in terms of P_4' and the CR Paneitz operator P_4 upon changing the choice of pseudo-Einstein contact forms. In particular, $\int Q_4'$ is an invariant of the class of pseudo-Einstein contact forms. For boundaries of domains, it is a biholomorphic invariant; indeed, it is the Burns–Epstein invariant [5, 6].

Suppose that θ is a pseudo-Einstein contact form on $(M^3, T^{1,0}M)$. Then $\hat{\theta} = e^w\theta$ is pseudo-Einstein if and only if w is a CR pluriharmonic function [17]. In particular, it makes sense to consider the transformation formula for the Q'-curvature, and one obtains

$$e^{2w}\hat{Q}_4' = Q_4' + P_4'(w) \mod \mathcal{P}^\perp \tag{1.4}$$

(see [6]). It is thus natural to consider the scalar quantity $\overline{Q}_4' := \tau Q_4'$. In particular, on the standard CR three-sphere, $\overline{P}_4'$ is precisely the operator considered by Branson, Fontana and Morpurgo [4] and $\overline{Q}_4'$ is precisely the constant in (1.2).

We construct contact forms for which $\overline{Q}_4'$ is constant by constructing minimizers of the II-functional $II\colon \mathcal{P} \to \mathbb{R}$ given by

$$II(w) = \int_M w\,\overline{P}_4'w + 2\int_M \overline{Q}_4'w - \left(\int_M \overline{Q}_4'\right)\log ⨍_M e^{2w} \tag{1.5}$$

on a pseudo-Einstein three-manifold $(M^3, T^{1,0}M, \theta)$. Note that, since II is only defined on $\mathcal{P}$, the projections in (1.5) can be removed; i.e. we can equivalently define the II-functional in terms of P_4' and Q_4'. In general the II-functional is not bounded below. However, under natural positivity conditions it is bounded below and coercive, in which case we can construct the desired minimizers.

Theorem 1.1. *Let $(M^3, T^{1,0}M, \theta)$ be a compact, embeddable pseudo-Einstein three-manifold such that the P'-operator $\overline{P}_4'$ is nonnegative and $\ker \overline{P}_4' = \mathbb{R}$. Suppose additionally that*

$$\int_M \overline{Q}_4'\,\theta\wedge d\theta < 16\pi^2. \tag{1.6}$$

Then there exists a function $w \in \mathcal{P}$ which minimizes the II-functional (1.5)*. Moreover, the contact form $\hat{\theta} := e^w\theta$ is such that $\hat{\overline{Q}}_4'$ is constant.*

The assumptions of Theorem 1.1 can be replaced by the assumptions that the CR Paneitz operator is nonnegative and there exists a pseudo-Einstein contact form with scalar curvature nonnegative but not identically zero. Note that this last assumption implies that the CR Yamabe constant is positive; it would be interesting to know if these conditions are equivalent. Chanillo, Chiu and the third-named author proved [9] that these assumptions imply that $(M^3, T^{1,0}M)$ is embeddable. The first- and third-named authors proved [6] that these assumptions imply both that $\overline{P}_4' \geq 0$ with $\ker \overline{P}_4' = \mathbb{R}$ and that $\int \overline{Q}_4' \leq 16\pi^2$ with equality if and only if $(M^3, T^{1,0}M)$ is CR equivalent to the standard CR three-sphere. Branson, Fontana and Morpurgo proved [4] Theorem 1.1 on the standard CR three-sphere. In summary, Theorem 1.1 implies the following result.

Corollary 1.2. *Let $(M^3, T^{1,0}M, \theta)$ be a compact pseudo-Einstein manifold with nonnegative CR Paneitz operator which admits a pseudo-Einstein contact form with positive scalar curvature. Then there exists a function $w \in \mathcal{P}$ which minimizes the II-functional* (1.5)*. Moreover, the contact form $\hat{\theta} := e^w\theta$ is such that $\hat{\overline{Q}}_4'$ is constant.*

Note that the assumptions of Theorem 1.1 are all CR invariant; in particular, if $(M^3, T^{1,0}M)$ is the boundary of a domain in $\mathbb{C}^2$, the assumptions are biholomorphic invariants. Note also that the conclusion that $\hat{\overline{Q}}_4'$ is constant cannot be strengthened to the conclusion that $\hat{Q}_4'$ is constant: In Section 5, we classify the contact forms on $S^1\times S^2$ with its flat CR structure which have $\overline{Q}_4'$ constant, and observe that Q_4' is nonconstant for all of them.

The proof of Theorem 1.1 is analogous to the corresponding result in four-dimensional conformal geometry [8], though there are many new difficulties we must overcome. Since we are minimizing within $\mathcal{P}$, there is a Lagrange multiplier in the Euler equation for the II-functional which lives in the orthogonal complement $\mathcal{P}^\perp$ to $\mathcal{P}$. This is avoided by working with $\overline{P}_4'$. The greater difficulty is to show that minimizers for the II-functional exist in $W^{2,2}\cap\mathcal{P}$ under the hypotheses of Theorem 1.1. This is achieved by showing that $\overline{P}_4'$ satisfies a Moser–Trudinger-type inequality with the same constant as on the standard CR three-sphere under the positive assumption on $\overline{P}_4'$ and (1.6).

To prove that $\overline{P}_4'$ satisfies the above Moser–Trudinger-type inequality, we study the asymptotics of the Green's function of $\left(\overline{P}_4'\right)^{1/2}$ in enough detail to apply the general results of Fontana and Morpurgo [12]. To make this precise, we require some more notation. Fix $\zeta\in M$ and let (z,t) be CR normal coordinates in a neighborhood of ζ such that $(z(\zeta),t(\zeta))=(0,0)$. Define $\rho^4(z,t)=|z|^4+t^2$. For $m\in\mathbb{R}$, let

$$\mathcal{E}(\rho^m)=\left\{g\in C^\infty(M\setminus\{\zeta\})\colon |\partial_z^p\partial_{\bar z}^q\partial_t^r g(z,t)|\leq\rho(z,t)^{m-p-q-2r}\text{ near }\zeta\right\}.$$

The asymptotics of the Green's function of $\left(\overline{P}_4'\right)^{1/2}$ are as follows.

Theorem 1.3. *Let $(M^3,T^{1,0}M,\theta)$ be a compact embeddable pseudohermitian manifold such that P_4' is nonnegative. Fix $\zeta\in M$ and let G_ζ be the Green's function for $\left(\overline{P}_4'\right)^{1/2}$ with pole at ζ. Then there is a function $B_\zeta\in C^\infty(M\setminus\{\zeta\})$ such that*

$$B_\zeta-\rho^{-2}\in\mathcal{E}\left(\rho^{-1-\varepsilon}\right)$$

for all $0<\varepsilon<1$ and

$$G_\zeta=\tau B_\zeta\tau.$$

We now outline the main argument used in the proof of Theorem 1.3. Fix a point $\zeta\in M$, the Green's function of $\left(\overline{P}_4'\right)^{1/2}$ at ζ is given by

$$G_\zeta=\left(\overline{P}_4'\right)^{-\frac12}\tau\delta_\zeta\tau. \tag{1.7}$$

Using standard argument in spectral theory, we observe that

$$\left(\overline{P}_4'\right)^{-\frac12}=c\int_0^\infty t^{-\frac12}\left(\overline{P}_4'+t+\pi\right)^{-1}dt \tag{1.8}$$

on $(\ker\overline{P}_4')^\perp\cap\hat{\mathcal{P}}$, where $\hat{\mathcal{P}}$ is the space of L^2 CR pluriharmonic functions, $\pi\colon\hat{\mathcal{P}}\to\operatorname{Ker}\overline{P}_4'$ is the orthogonal projection, and $c^{-1}=\int_0^\infty t^{-\frac12}(1+t)^{-1}dt$. Theorem 1.3 then follows from asymptotic expansions for $t^{-\frac12}\left(\overline{P}_4'+t+\pi\right)^{-1}$. By using Boutet de Monvel–Sjöstrand's classical theorem for the Szegő kernel [2], we first show that $\overline{P}_4'=\tau E_2$ for E_2 a classical elliptic pseudodifferential operator on M of order 2. This allows us to apply classical theory of pseudodifferential operators to find a pseudodifferential operator G_t of order -2 depending continuously on t such that $(E_2+t)G_t=I+F_t$, where F_t is a smoothing operator depending continuously on t and $|F_t(x,y)|_{C^m(M\times M)}\lesssim\frac{1}{1+t}$ for all $m\in\mathbb{N}$. Roughly speaking, $\tau G_t\tau$ is the leading term of the operator $\left(\overline{P}_4'+t+\pi\right)^{-1}$. By carefully studying the principal symbol and t-behavior of G_t, we can show that $G := c\int_0^\infty t^{-\frac{1}{2}}\tau G_t\tau$ is a smoothing operator of order 2 with $G\tau\delta_\zeta\tau = \rho^{-2} \mod \mathcal{E}\left(\rho^{-1-\varepsilon}\right)$, for every $\varepsilon > 0$.

This article is organized as follows. In Section 2 we review some basic concepts from pseudohermitian geometry and the definitions of the P'-operator and the Q'-curvature. In Section 3 we use Theorem 1.3 to show that $\left(\overline{P}_4'\right)^{1/2}$ satisfies a sharp Moser–Trudinger-type inequality. In Section 4 we prove Theorem 1.1. In Section 5 we show that there is no pseudo-Einstein contact form on $S^1 \times S^2$ for which Q_4' is constant. The remaining sections are devoted to the proof of Theorem 1.3. In Section 6 we review some basic concepts about pseudodifferential operators and Fourier integral operators. In Section 7 we recall some properties of the orthogonal projection τ established in [21]. In Section 8 we establish some properties of the principal symbol of $\tau\Delta_b\tau$. In Section 9 we prove Theorem 1.3.

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2. Some pseudohermitian geometry

In this section we summarize some important concepts in pseudohermitian geometry as are needed to study the P'-operator and the Q'-curvature in dimension three.

Let M^3 be a smooth, oriented (real) three-dimensional manifold. A *CR structure* on M is a one-dimensional complex subbundle $T^{1,0} \subset T_{\mathbb{C}}M := TM \otimes \mathbb{C}$ such that $T^{1,0} \cap T^{0,1} = \{0\}$ for $T^{0,1} := \overline{T^{1,0}}$. Let $H = \operatorname{Re} T^{1,0}$ and let $J\colon H \to H$ be the almost complex structure defined by $J(V + \bar{V}) = i(V - \bar{V})$.

Let θ be a *contact form* for $(M^3, T^{1,0}M)$; i.e. θ is a nonvanishing real one-form such that $\ker\theta = H$. Since M is oriented, a contact form always exists, and is determined up to multiplication by a positive real-valued smooth function. We say that $(M^3, T^{1,0}M)$ is *strictly pseudoconvex* if the *Levi form* $d\theta(\cdot, J\cdot)$ on $H \otimes H$ is positive definite for some, and hence any, choice of contact form θ. We shall always assume that our CR manifolds are strictly pseudoconvex.

A *pseudohermitian manifold* is a triple $(M^3, T^{1,0}M, \theta)$ consisting of a CR manifold and a contact form. The *Reeb vector field* T is the vector field such that $\theta(T) = 1$ and $d\theta(T, \cdot) = 0$. A $(1,0)$-*form* is a section of $T_{\mathbb{C}}^*M$ which annihilates $T^{0,1}$. An *admissible coframe* is a nonvanishing $(1,0)$-form θ^1 in an open set $U \subset M$ such that $\theta^1(T) = 0$. Let $\theta^{\bar{1}} := \overline{\theta^1}$ be its conjugate. Then $d\theta = ih_{1\bar{1}}\theta^1 \wedge \theta^{\bar{1}}$ for some positive function $h_{1\bar{1}}$. The function $h_{1\bar{1}}$ is equivalent to the Levi form.

The *connection form* ${\omega_1}^1$ and the *torsion form* $\tau_1 = A_{11}\theta^1$ determined by an admissible coframe θ^1 are uniquely determined by

$$\begin{aligned} d\theta^1 &= \theta^1 \wedge {\omega_1}^1 + \theta \wedge \tau^1, \\ \omega_{1\bar{1}} + \omega_{\bar{1}1} &= dh_{1\bar{1}}, \end{aligned}$$

where we use $h_{1\bar{1}}$ to raise and lower indices as normal; e.g. $\tau^1 = h^{1\bar{1}}\tau_{\bar{1}}$ for $h^{1\bar{1}} = (h_{1\bar{1}})^{-1}$. The connection forms determine the *pseudohermitian connection* ∇ by

$$\nabla Z_1 := {\omega_1}^1 \otimes Z_1$$

for $\{Z_1, Z_{\bar{1}}, T\}$ the dual basis to $\{\theta^1, \theta^{\bar{1}}, \theta\}$. The *scalar curvature* R of θ is given by the expression

$$d\omega_1{}^1 = R\theta^1 \wedge \theta^{\bar{1}} \mod \theta.$$

A (real-valued) function $w \in C^\infty(M)$ is *CR pluriharmonic* if locally $w = \operatorname{Re} f$ for some (complex-valued) function $f \in C^\infty(M, \mathbb{C})$ satisfying $Z_{\bar{1}} f = 0$. Equivalently, w is a CR pluriharmonic function if

$$\nabla_1 \nabla_1 \nabla^1 w + iA_{11} \nabla^1 w = 0$$

for $\nabla_1 := \nabla_{Z_1}$ (cf. [27]). We denote by $\mathcal{P}$ the space of all CR pluriharmonic functions.

Take $\theta \wedge d\theta$ to be the volume form on M. This induces a natural inner product $(\cdot, \cdot)$ on $C^\infty(M)$. Let $L^2(M)$ and $\hat{\mathcal{P}}$ denote the completions of $C^\infty(M)$ and $\mathcal{P}$, respectively, with respect to this inner product.

The *Paneitz operator* P_4 is the differential operator

$$\begin{aligned} P_4(w) &:= 4\nabla^1 \left(\nabla_1 \nabla_1 \nabla^1 w + iA_{11} \nabla^1 w \right) \\ &= \Delta_b^2 w + T^2 - 4 \operatorname{Im} \nabla^1 \left(A_{11} \nabla^1 f \right) \end{aligned}$$

for $\Delta_b := \nabla^1 \nabla_1 + \nabla^{\bar{1}} \nabla_{\bar{1}}$ the *sublaplacian*. Note in particular that $\mathcal{P} \subset \ker P_4$. A key property of the Paneitz operator is that it is CR covariant; if $\hat{\theta} = e^w \theta$, then $e^{2w} \hat{P}_4 = P_4$ (cf. [17]).

Definition 2.1. Let $(M^3, T^{1,0}M, \theta)$ be a pseudohermitian manifold. The *P'-operator* $P' \colon \mathcal{P} \to C^\infty(M)$ is defined by

$$\begin{aligned} P_4' f &= 4\Delta_b^2 f - 8 \operatorname{Im} \left(\nabla^\alpha (A_{\alpha\beta} \nabla^\beta f) \right) - 4 \operatorname{Re} \left(\nabla^\alpha (R \nabla_\alpha f) \right) \\ &\quad + \frac{8}{3} \operatorname{Re} W_\alpha \nabla^\alpha f - \frac{4}{3} f \nabla^\alpha W_\alpha \end{aligned} \tag{2.1}$$

for $f \in \mathcal{P}$, where $W_\alpha := \nabla_\alpha R - i\nabla^\beta A_{\alpha\beta}$.

In particular,

$$\begin{aligned} &P_4' f = 4\Delta_b^2 f + R\Delta_b f + \Delta_b R f + (L_1 L_2 + \overline{L}_1 \overline{L}_2) f + (L_3 + \overline{L}_3) f + rf, \\ &L_1, L_2, L_3 \in C^\infty(M, T^{1,0}M), \quad r \in C^\infty(M), \quad f \in \mathcal{P}. \end{aligned} \tag{2.2}$$

A key property of the P'-operator is its conformal covariance: Let $(M^3, T^{1,0}M, \theta)$ be a pseudohermitian manifold, let $w \in C^\infty(M)$, and set $\hat{\theta} = e^w \theta$. Then

$$e^{2w} \hat{P}_4'(u) = P_4'(u) + P_4(uw) \tag{2.3}$$

for all $u \in \mathcal{P}$. In particular, since P_4 is self-adjoint and annihilates CR pluriharmonic functions, (2.3) implies that the P'-operator is conformally covariant, mod $\mathcal{P}^\perp$.

A pseudohermitian manifold $(M^3, T^{1,0}M, \theta)$ is *pseudo-Einstein* if $W_\alpha = 0$ for W_α as in Definition 2.1.

Definition 2.2. Let $(M^3, T^{1,0}M, \theta)$ be a pseudo-Einstein manifold. The *Q'-curvature* is

$$Q_4' = 2\Delta_b R - 4|A|^2 + R^2. \tag{2.4}$$

A key property of the Q'-curvature is its conformal covariance: Let $(M^3, T^{1,0}M, \theta)$ be a pseudo-Einstein manifold, let $w \in \mathcal{P}$, and set $\hat{\theta} = e^w\theta$. Hence $\hat{\theta}$ is pseudo-Einstein [17]. Then

$$e^{2w}\hat{Q}_4' = Q_4' + P_4'(w) + \frac{1}{2}P_4\left(w^2\right). \tag{2.5}$$

In particular, Q_4' behaves as the Q-curvature for P_4', mod $\mathcal{P}^\perp$.

3. The Moser–Trudinger inequality for the P'-operator

A key step in our proof of Theorem 1.1 is to show that the P'-operator satisfies the same sharp Moser–Trudinger-type inequality as its counterpart on the sphere. This follows from the asymptotic expansion for the Green's function of $\left(\overline{P}_4'\right)^{1/2}$ given in Theorem 1.3 and the general Adams-type theorem of Fontana and Morpurgo [12].

Given $k \in \mathbb{N}$ and $q > 0$, let $W^{k,q}$ denote the non-isotropic Sobolev space, given by the set of all functions u such that $Z_1Z_2\cdots Z_ju \in L^q(M)$ for all $Z_j \in C^\infty(M, T^{1,0}M \oplus T^{0,1}M))$, $j = 0, 1, 2, \dots, k$,

Theorem 3.1. *Let $(M^3, T^{1,0}M, \theta)$ be a compact pseudo-Einstein three-manifold for which the P'-operator is nonnegative with trivial kernel. Then there exists a constant C such that*

$$\log \fint_M e^{2(w-w_0)} \leq C + \frac{1}{16\pi^2}\int_M w\,\overline{P}_4'w \tag{3.1}$$

for all $w \in W^{2,2} \cap \mathcal{P}$.

Proof. From Theorem 1.3 we see that the leading order term of the Green's function for $\overline{P}_4'$ is independent of $(M^3, T^{1,0}M, \theta)$; in particular, it has exactly the same leading order term as the Green's function for the P'-operator on the standard CR three-sphere. Furthermore, the next term in the asymptotic expansion of the Green's function involves a definite loss of power in the asymptotic coordination ρ. Thus, by arguing analogously to the proof of [4, Theorem 2.1], we may apply the main result [12, Theorem 1] to conclude that there is a constant $C > 0$ such that

$$\int_M \exp\left(16\pi^2\frac{(w-w_0)^2}{\int w\overline{P}_4'w}\right)\theta\wedge d\theta \leq C \tag{3.2}$$

for all $f \in W^{2,2} \cap \mathcal{P}$. The desired inequality (3.1) is an immediate consequence of (3.2) and the elementary estimate

$$0 \leq 16\pi^2\frac{(w-w_0)^2}{\int w\overline{P}_4'w} - 2(w-w_0) + \frac{1}{16\pi^2}\int_M w\overline{P}_4'w. \qquad \square$$

Remark 3.2. A few comments are in order to explain the above constants. The convention used in [4] is that the sublaplacian is given by $-\operatorname{Re}\nabla^\gamma\nabla_\gamma$, which shows that our definition is -2 times theirs. With this in mind, their formula [4, (1.30)] for the P'-operator shows that our definition is 4 times theirs. Finally, they integrate with respect to the Riemannian volume element on S^3, regarded as the unit ball in $\mathbb{R}^4$, while we integrate with respect to $\theta \wedge d\theta$ for $\theta = \operatorname{Im}\overline{\partial}\left(|z|^2 - 1\right)$; in particular, our volume form is 2 times theirs. Together, these normalizations account for the apparent difference between our constant in (3.2) and the constant appearing in [4, (2.11)]. Note that θ has scalar curvature $R = 2$, and hence $\overline{Q}_4' = 4$.

4. Minimizing the functional II

Assuming the results of Section 9, we prove that smooth minimizers of the II-functional exist under natural positivity assumptions. We first construct weak minimizers.

Theorem 4.1. *Let $(M^3, T^{1,0}M, \theta)$ be a compact pseudo-Einstein three-manifold such that $\int \overline{Q}_4' < 16\pi^2$. Suppose additionally that the P_4'-operator is nonnegative with $\ker \overline{P}_4' = \mathbb{R}$. Then*

$$\inf_{w\in W^{2,2}\cap\mathcal{P}} II[w]$$

is obtained by some function $w \in W^{2,2}\cap\mathcal{P}$.

Proof. Denote $k = \int \overline{Q}_4'$. Recall that

$$II[w] = (\overline{P}_4' w, w) + 2\int_M \overline{Q}_4'(w-w_0) - k\log ⨍_M e^{2(w-w_0)}$$

for $w_0 = ⨍ w$ the average value of M. If $k\leq 0$, it follows immediately that

$$II[w] \geq \left(\overline{P}_4' w, w\right) + 2\int_M \overline{Q}_4'(w-w_0),$$

while if $k>0$, Theorem 3.1 implies that

$$II[w] \geq \left(1-\frac{k}{16\pi^2}\right)\left(\overline{P}_4' w, w\right) + 2\int_M \overline{Q}_4'(w-w_0) - kC.$$

Together, these estimates imply that

$$II(w) \geq \left(1-\frac{k^+}{16\pi^2}\right)\left(\overline{P}_4' w, w\right) + 2\int_M \overline{Q}_4'(w-w_0) - C \tag{4.1}$$

for $k^+ = \max\{0,k\}$ and C a positive constant depending only on $(M^3, T^{1,0}M, \theta)$.

Denote by $\lambda_1 = \lambda_1(\overline{P}_4')$ the first nonzero eigenvalue

$$\lambda_1(\overline{P}_4') = \inf\left\{\frac{(P_4' w, w)}{\|w\|_2^2} : w\in W^{2,2}\cap\mathcal{P}, \quad \int_M w = 0\right\}$$

of $\overline{P}_4'$. By assumption, $\lambda_1 > 0$. Together with (4.1), this shows that there are positive constants c_1, c_2 depending only on $(M^3, T^{1,0}M, \theta)$ such that

$$II[w] \geq c_1\|w-w_0\|_2^2 - c_2. \tag{4.2}$$

In particular, II is bounded below.

Let $\{w_k\}\subset\mathcal{P}$ be a minimizing sequence of II, normalized so that $\|w_k\|_2 = 1$ for all $k\in\mathbb{N}$. Using (4.1) and the local formula (2.1) for P_4', it is easily seen that there is a positive constant c_3 depending only on $(M^3, T^{1,0}M, \theta)$ such that

$$\begin{split}\left(1-\frac{k^+}{16\pi^2}\right)\int_M (\Delta_b w_k)^2 \leq c_3\left|\int_M R|\nabla_b w_k|^2\right| + c_3\left|\int_M \operatorname{Im} A_{\alpha\beta}\nabla^\alpha w_k\nabla^\beta w_k\right| \\ + 2\left|\int_M Q_4'\left(w_k - (w_k)_0\right)\right| + c_3.\end{split} \tag{4.3}$$

On the other hand, given any $\varepsilon>0$, it holds that

$$\int_M |\nabla_b w_k|^2 = -\int_M w_k\Delta_b w_k \leq \varepsilon\int_M (\Delta_b w_k)^2 + \frac{1}{4\varepsilon}\|w_k - (w_k)_0\|_2^2.$$

We may thus combine (4.2) and (4.3) to conclude that $\{w_k\}$ is uniformly bounded in $W^{2,2}\cap\mathcal{P}$. Thus, by choosing a subsequence if necessary, we see that w_k converges weakly in $W^{2,2}\cap\mathcal{P}$ to a minimizer $w\in W^{2,2}\cap\mathcal{P}$ of II. □

We next show that weak critical points of the II-functional are smooth.

Theorem 4.2. *Let $(M^3,T^{1,0}M,\theta)$ be a compact three-dimensional pseudo-Einstein manifold. Suppose that $w\in W^{2,2}\cap\mathcal{P}$ is a critical point of the II-functional. Then w is smooth, and moreover, the contact form $\hat\theta := e^w\theta$ is such that $\hat{\overline{Q}}_4'$ is constant.*

Proof. It is readily seen that w is a critical point of the II-functional if and only if w is a weak solution to

$$P_4'w + Q_4' = \lambda e^{2w} \mod \mathcal{P}^\perp. \tag{4.4}$$

In particular, if w is smooth, then (2.5) implies that $\hat{\overline{Q}}_4'$ is constant. Now, we prove that w is smooth. Fix $\ell\in\mathbb{N}$ sufficiently large and let B_ℓ and C_ℓ be as in Theorem 9.17. From (4.4), we have

$$\tau B_\ell\tau(\lambda e^{2w}) = \tau B_\ell \overline{P}_4' w + \tau B_\ell\tau Q_4' = w + \tau C_\ell w + \tau B_\ell \tau Q_4'. \tag{4.5}$$

Note that

$$\tau C_\ell w + \tau B_\ell\tau Q_4' \in C^\ell(M). \tag{4.6}$$

Since $w\in W^{2,2}$, we have $\Delta_b w\in L^2(M)$. From Theorem 9.18, we conclude that

$$e^{c|w|^2}\in L^1(M),\quad c>0,$$

and hence

$$\lambda e^{2w}\in L^q(M),\quad \forall q>1. \tag{4.7}$$

Since $\tau B_\ell\tau$ is a smoothing operator of order $4-\varepsilon$ for all $0<\varepsilon<1$, it holds that (see [23, Proposition 2.7])

$$\tau B_\ell \tau : W^{k,q}\to W^{k+1,q},\quad \text{for all } q>1 \text{ and all } k\in\mathbb{N}_0. \tag{4.8}$$

From (4.5), (4.7) and (4.8), we obtain that

$$w\in W^{1,q},\quad \text{for all } q>1. \tag{4.9}$$

From (4.7) and (4.9) it is easy to see that $\lambda e^{2w}\in W^{1,q}$ for all $q>1$. From this, (4.5) and (4.8) we conclude that $w+\tau C_\ell w+\tau B_\ell\tau Q_4'\in W^{2,q}$ for all $q>1$. Continuing in this way, we deduce that $w+\tau C_\ell w+\tau B_\ell \tau Q_4'\in W^{k,q}$ for all $q>1$ and all $k\in\mathbb{N}_0$ with $k\le \ell$. Thus, $w\in W^{\ell,q}$, for all $q>1$. Since ℓ is arbitrary, we deduce that w is smooth. □

Proof of Theorem 1.1. By Theorem 4.1, there is a minimizer $w\in W^{2,2}\cap\mathcal{P}$ of the II-functional. By Theorem 4.2, w is smooth and the contact form $\hat\theta := e^w\theta$ is such that $\hat{\overline{Q}}_4'$ is constant, as desired. □

5. An example

Here we provide an example to show that minimizers of the II-functional, while they have $\overline{Q}_4'$ constant, need not have Q_4'-constant. More precisely, we will prove the following theorem.

Theorem 5.1. *Let Γ be a nontrivial dilation of the Heisenberg group $\mathbb{H}^1$ which fixes the origin $0 \in \mathbb{H}^1$. Then $S^1 \times S^2 = (\mathbb{H}^1 \setminus \{0\})/\Gamma$ with its standard CR structure is such that the minimizer of the II-functional is unique up to an additive constant, and moreover, the corresponding contact form $\hat{\theta}$ has $\hat{\overline{Q}}_4' \equiv 0$ but $\hat{Q}_4' \not\equiv 0$.*

Proof. Let $\rho(z,t) = \left(|z|^4 + t^2\right)^{1/4}$ be the usual pseudo-distance on $\mathbb{H}^1$. It is straightforward to check that the contact form $\theta_1 = \rho^{-4}\theta_0$ on $\mathbb{H}^1 \setminus \{0\}$ is such that $\theta_1 = \Phi^*\theta_0$ for $\Phi(z,t)$ the CR inversion through the pseudo-sphere $\rho^{-1}(1)$. In particular, θ_1 is flat, and hence $\log\rho \in \mathcal{P}$. From (2.5) it follows that

$$P_4' \log\rho^{-4} + \frac{1}{2}P_4 \log^2\rho^{-4} = 0. \tag{5.1}$$

Consider now the contact form $\theta := \rho^{-2}\theta_0$. It is clear that θ is invariant under the action of Γ, and hence θ descends to a well-defined contact form on $S^1 \times S^2$. Since $\log\rho \in \mathcal{P}$, we know that θ is pseudo-Einstein. From (2.5) we see that the Q'-curvature Q_4' of θ is

$$\rho^{-4}Q_4' = P_4'\log\rho^{-2} + \frac{1}{2}P_4\log^2\rho^{-2} = -\frac{1}{2}P_4\log^2\rho^{-2}, \tag{5.2}$$

where the second equality uses (5.1). Since the Paneitz operator P_4 is self-adjoint and $\mathcal{P} \subset \operatorname{Ker} P_4$, it follows that Q_4' is orthogonal, with respect to $\theta \wedge d\theta$, to the CR pluriharmonic functions. In particular, $\overline{Q}_4' \equiv 0$. Furthermore, one can compute directly from (5.2) that

$$Q_4' = 8\frac{|z|^4 - t^2}{|z|^4 + t^2},$$

which is clearly not identically zero.

Finally, using Lee's formula for the change of the scalar curvature under a conformal change of contact form [27, Lemma 2.4], we compute that the scalar curvature R of θ is

$$R = 2\frac{|z|^2}{\rho^2}.$$

Since this is nonnegative and θ is pseudo-Einstein, $\overline{P}_4'$ is nonnegative with trivial kernel [6, Proposition 4.9]. Now, if $\hat{\theta} = e^u\theta$ is a pseudo-Einstein contact form on $S^1 \times S^2$ for which $\hat{\overline{Q}}_4' \equiv 0$, the transformation formula (2.5) implies that $\overline{P}_4' u \equiv 0$, whence u is constant, as desired. ☐

6. Preliminaries for pseudodifferential operators

We shall use the following notations: $\mathbb{R}$ is the set of real numbers, $\mathbb{R}_+ := \{x \in \mathbb{R};\, x > 0\}$, $\overline{\mathbb{R}}_+ := \{x \in \mathbb{R};\, x \geq 0\}$, $\mathbb{N} = \{1, 2, \ldots\}$, and $\mathbb{N}_0 = \mathbb{N} \cup \{0\}$. An element $\alpha = (\alpha_1, \ldots, \alpha_n)$ of $\mathbb{N}_0^n$ is a *multi-index*, the *size* of α is $|\alpha| = \alpha_1 + \cdots + \alpha_n$, and the *length* of α is $l(\alpha) = n$. For $m \in \mathbb{N}$, we write $\alpha \in \{1, \ldots, m\}^n$ if $\alpha_j \in \{1, \ldots, m\}$ for all $j = 1, \ldots, n$. We say that α is strictly increasing if $\alpha_1 < \alpha_2 < \cdots < \alpha_n$.

Given a multi-index α, we write $x^\alpha = x_1^{\alpha_1}\cdots x_n^{\alpha_n}$ for $x=(x_1,\ldots,x_n)$; we write $\partial_x^\alpha = \partial_{x_1}^{\alpha_1}\cdots\partial_{x_n}^{\alpha_n}$ for $\partial_{x_j} = \frac{\partial}{\partial x_j}$ and $\partial_x^\alpha = \frac{\partial^{|\alpha|}}{\partial x^\alpha}$; we write $D_x^\alpha = D_{x_1}^{\alpha_1}\cdots D_{x_n}^{\alpha_n}$ for $D_x = \frac{1}{i}\partial_x$ and $D_{x_j} = \frac{1}{i}\partial_{x_j}$.

Let $z=(z_1,\ldots,z_n)$, $z_j = x_{2j-1}+ix_{2j}$, $j=1,\ldots,n$, be coordinates of $\mathbb{C}^n$. Given a multi-index α, we write $z^\alpha = z_1^{\alpha_1}\cdots z_n^{\alpha_n}$ and $\overline{z}^\alpha = \overline{z}_1^{\alpha_1}\cdots\overline{z}_n^{\alpha_n}$; we write $\frac{\partial^{|\alpha|}}{\partial z^\alpha} = \partial_z^\alpha = \partial_{z_1}^{\alpha_1}\cdots\partial_{z_n}^{\alpha_n}$, where $\partial_{z_j} = \frac{\partial}{\partial z_j} = \frac{1}{2}\big(\frac{\partial}{\partial x_{2j-1}} - i\frac{\partial}{\partial x_{2j}}\big)$ for all $j=1,\ldots,n$; similarly, we write $\frac{\partial^{|\alpha|}}{\partial \overline{z}^\alpha} = \partial_{\overline{z}}^\alpha = \partial_{\overline{z}_1}^{\alpha_1}\cdots\partial_{\overline{z}_n}^{\alpha_n}$, where $\partial_{\overline{z}_j} = \frac{\partial}{\partial \overline{z}_j} = \frac{1}{2}\big(\frac{\partial}{\partial x_{2j-1}} + i\frac{\partial}{\partial x_{2j}}\big)$ for all $j=1,\ldots,n$.

Let M be a smooth manifold. We denote by $\langle\,\cdot\,,\cdot\,\rangle$ the pointwise duality between TM and T^*M. We extend $\langle\,\cdot\,,\cdot\,\rangle$ bilinearly to $T_{\mathbb{C}}M\times T^*_{\mathbb{C}}M$. Let E be a C^∞ vector bundle over M. The fiber of E at $x\in M$ are denoted by E_x. Let $Y\subset M$ be an open set. The spaces of smooth sections of E over Y and distributional sections of E over Y are denoted by $C^\infty(Y,E)$ and $\mathscr{D}'(Y,E)$, respectively. Let $\mathscr{E}'(Y,E)$ be the subspace of $\mathscr{D}'(Y,E)$ whose elements have compact support in Y. For $m\in\mathbb{R}$, let $H^m(Y,E)$ denote the Sobolev space of order m of sections of E over Y. Put

$$\begin{aligned} H^m_{\mathrm{loc}}(Y,E) &= \left\{u\in\mathscr{D}'(Y,E)\colon \varphi u\in H^m(Y,E) \text{ for all } \varphi\in C_0^\infty(Y)\right\}, \\ H^m_{\mathrm{comp}}(Y,E) &= H^m_{\mathrm{loc}}(Y,E)\cap\mathscr{E}'(Y,E). \end{aligned}$$

Fix a smooth density of integration on M. If $A\colon C_0^\infty(M,E)\to\mathscr{D}'(M,F)$ is continuous, we write $A(x,y)$ to denote the distributional kernel of A. The following two statements are equivalent:

(a) A is continuous as a mapping from $\mathscr{E}'(M,E)$ to $C^\infty(M,F)$.
(b) $A(x,y)\in C^\infty(M\times M, E_y\boxtimes F_x)$.

If A satisfies (a) or (b), we say that A is smoothing. Let $B\colon C_0^\infty(M,E)\to\mathscr{D}'(M,F)$ be a continuous operator. We write $A\equiv B$ if $A-B$ is a smoothing operator.

Let $H(x,y)\in\mathscr{D}'(M\times M, E_y\boxtimes F_x)$. We also denote by h the unique continuous operator $H\colon C_0^\infty(M,E)\to\mathscr{D}'(M,F)$ with distribution kernel $H(x,y)$. We henceforth identify H with $H(x,y)$.

Recall the Hörmander symbol spaces:

Definition 6.1. Let $M\subset\mathbb{R}^N$ be an open set and let $m\in\mathbb{R}$. $S^m_{1,0}(M\times\mathbb{R}^{N_1})$ is the space of all $a\in C^\infty(M\times\mathbb{R}^{N_1})$ such that for all compact $K\Subset M$ and all $\alpha\in\mathbb{N}_0^N$, $\beta\in\mathbb{N}_0^{N_1}$, there is a constant $C>0$ such that

$$\left|\partial_x^\alpha\partial_\theta^\beta a(x,\theta)\right| \le C(1+|\theta|)^{m-|\beta|} \quad \text{for all} \quad (x,\theta)\in K\times\mathbb{R}^{N_1}.$$

Denote

$$S^{-\infty}(M\times\mathbb{R}^{N_1}) := \bigcap_{m\in\mathbb{R}} S^m_{1,0}(M\times\mathbb{R}^{N_1}).$$

Let $a_j\in S^{m_j}_{1,0}(M\times\mathbb{R}^{N_1})$ for $j\in\mathbb{N}_0$ with $m_j\to-\infty$ as $j\to\infty$. Then there exists $a\in S^{m_0}_{1,0}(M\times\mathbb{R}^{N_1})$, unique modulo $S^{-\infty}(M\times\mathbb{R}^{N_1})$, such that $a-\sum\limits_{j=0}^{k-1}a_j\in S^{m_k}_{1,0}(M\times\mathbb{R}^{N_1})$ for all $k\in\{0,1,2,\ldots\}$.

If a and a_j have the properties above, we write $a\sim\sum_{j=0}^\infty a_j$ in $S^{m_0}_{1,0}(M\times\mathbb{R}^{N_1})$.

Let $S^m_{\mathrm{cl}}(M\times\mathbb{R}^{N_1})$ be the space of all symbols $a(x,\theta)\in S^m_{1,0}(M\times\mathbb{R}^{N_1})$ with

$$a(x,\theta)\sim\sum_{j=0}^\infty a_{m-j}(x,\theta) \text{ in } S^m_{1,0}(M\times\mathbb{R}^{N_1}),$$

with $a_k(x,\theta) \in C^\infty(M \times \mathbb{R}^{N_1})$ positively homogeneous of degree k in θ; that is, $a_k(x,\lambda\theta) = \lambda^k a_k(x,\theta)$ for all $\lambda \geq 1$ and all $|\theta| \geq 1$.

By using partition of unity, we extend the definitions above to the cases when M is a smooth manifold and when we replace $M \times \mathbb{R}^{N_1}$ by T^*M.

Let $\Omega \subset M^3$ be an open coordinate patch. Let $a(x,\xi) \in S^k_{1,0}(T^*\Omega)$. We define

$$A(x,y) = \frac{1}{(2\pi)^3}\int e^{i<x-y,\xi>}a(x,\xi)d\xi$$

as an oscillatory integral. One can show that

$$A\colon C^\infty_0(\Omega) \to C^\infty(\Omega)$$

is continuous and has a unique continuous extension $A\colon \mathscr{E}'(\Omega) \to \mathscr{D}'(\Omega)$.

Definition 6.2. Let $k \in \mathbb{R}$. A classical pseudodifferential operator of order k on M is a continuous linear map $A\colon C^\infty(M) \to \mathscr{D}'(M)$ such that on every open coordinate patch Ω, if we consider A as a continuous operator

$$A\colon C^\infty_0(\Omega) \to C^\infty(\Omega),$$

then the distributional kernel of A is

$$A(x,y) = \frac{1}{(2\pi)^3}\int e^{i<x-y,\xi>}a(x,\xi)d\xi$$

with $a \in S^k_{\mathrm{cl}}(T^*\Omega)$. We call $a(x,\xi)$ the symbol of A. We write $L^k_{\mathrm{cl}}(M)$ to denote the space of classical pseudodifferential operators of order k on M.

7. The distributional kernel of τ

In this section, we review some results in [21] about the orthogonal projection $\tau\colon L^2 \to L^2 \cap \mathcal{P}$ which are needed in the proof of our main result.

Let $\langle\,\cdot\,|\,\cdot\,\rangle$ be the Hermitian inner product on $T_{\mathbb{C}}M$ given by

$$\langle Z_1|Z_2\rangle = -\frac{1}{2i}\langle\, d\theta\,,\, Z_1 \wedge \overline{Z}_2\,\rangle \quad \text{for all } Z_1, Z_2 \in T^{1,0}M.$$

The Hermitian metric $\langle\,\cdot\,|\,\cdot\,\rangle$ on $T_{\mathbb{C}}M$ induces a Hermitian metric $\langle\,\cdot\,|\,\cdot\,\rangle$ on $T^*_{\mathbb{C}}M$. Take $\theta \wedge d\theta$ to be the volume form on M, we then get natural inner product on $\Omega^{0,1}(M) := C^\infty(M, T^{*0,1}M)$ induced by $\theta\wedge d\theta$ and $\langle\,\cdot\,|\,\cdot\,\rangle$, where $T^{*0,1}M$ denotes the bundle of $(0,1)$ forms of M. We denote this inner product by $(\,\cdot\,,\cdot\,)$ and denote the corresponding norm by $\|\cdot\|$. Let $L^2_{(0,1)}(M)$ denote the completion of $\Omega^{0,1}(M)$ with respect to $(\,\cdot\,,\cdot\,)$. Let $\overline{\partial}_b\colon C^\infty(M) \to \Omega^{0,1}(M)$ be the tangential Cauchy-Riemann operator. We extend $\overline{\partial}_b$ to L^2 by $\overline{\partial}_b\colon \operatorname{Dom}\overline{\partial}_b \to L^2_{(0,1)}(M)$, where

$$\operatorname{Dom}\overline{\partial}_b := \left\{u \in L^2(M)\colon\ \overline{\partial}_b u \in L^2_{(0,1)}(M)\right\}.$$

Let $\overline{\partial}^*_b\colon \operatorname{Dom}\overline{\partial}^*_b \to L^2(M)$ be the L^2 adjoint of $\overline{\partial}_b$. The Kohn Laplacian is given by

$$\begin{aligned}
&\Box_b := \overline{\partial}^*_b\overline{\partial}_b\colon \operatorname{Dom}\Box_b \to L^2(M),\\
&\operatorname{Dom}\Box_b = \left\{u \in L^2(M)\colon u \in \operatorname{Dom}\overline{\partial}_b, \overline{\partial}_b u \in \operatorname{Dom}\overline{\partial}^*_b\right\}.
\end{aligned} \tag{7.1}$$

Note that $\Box_b$ is self-adjoint.

The orthogonal projection $S\colon L^2(M) \to \ker \overline{\partial}_b = \operatorname{Ker} \Box_b$ is the *Szegő projection*. From now on, we assume that M is embeddable. The follow facts are shown by the second-named author; see [21, Theorem 1.2 and Remark 1.4].

Theorem 7.1. *With the assumptions and notations above, we have*

$$\tau = S + \overline{S} + F, \tag{7.2}$$

where F is a smoothing operator. Moreover, the kernel $\tau(x,y) \in \mathscr{D}'(M \times M)$ of τ satisfies

$$\tau(x,y) \equiv \int_0^\infty e^{i\varphi(x,y)s} a(x,y,s)ds + \int_0^\infty e^{-i\overline{\varphi}(x,y)s} \overline{a}(x,y,s)ds, \tag{7.3}$$

where

$$\begin{aligned}
&a(x,y,s) \in S^1_{\mathrm{cl}}\left(M \times M \times (0,\infty)\right), \\
&a(x,y,s) \sim \sum_{j=0}^{\infty} a_j(x,y)s^{1-j} \ \textit{ in } S^1_{1,0}\left(M \times M \times (0,\infty)\right), \\
&a_j(x,y) \in C^\infty(M \times M) \quad \textit{for all } j \in \mathbb{N}_0, \\
&a_0(x,x) = \frac{1}{2}\pi^{-n} \quad \textit{for all } x \in M,
\end{aligned} \tag{7.4}$$

and

$$\begin{aligned}
&\varphi \in C^\infty(M \times M), \quad \operatorname{Im} \varphi(x,y) \geq 0, \quad d_x\varphi|_{x=y} = -\theta(x), \\
&\varphi(x,y) = -\overline{\varphi}(y,x), \\
&\varphi(x,y) = 0 \textit{ if and only if } x = y, \\
&\sigma_{\Box_b}(x, \varphi'_x(x,y)) \textit{ vanishes to infinite order on } x = y.
\end{aligned} \tag{7.5}$$

Here $\sigma_{\Box_b}$ denotes the principal symbol of $\Box_b$.

We need the following fact about the Szegő kernel (cf. [2, 20]).

Theorem 7.2. *With the assumptions and notations above, the distributional kernel of S satisfies*

$$S(x,y) \equiv \int_0^\infty e^{i\varphi(x,y)s} a(x,y,s)ds$$

where $\varphi(x,y) \in C^\infty(M \times M)$ and $a(x,y,s) \in S^1_{\mathrm{cl}}\left(M \times M \times (0,\infty)\right)$ are as in Theorem 7.1.

8. The principal symbol of $\tau\Delta_b$ on $\mathcal{P}$

It is well-known that Δ_b is a subelliptic operator. However, if we restrict Δ_b to $\mathcal{P}$, it is equivalent to an elliptic pseudodifferential operator.

Theorem 8.1. *There is a classical elliptic pseudodifferential operator $E_1 \in L^1_{\mathrm{cl}}(M)$ with real-valued principal symbol such that*

$$\tau\Delta_b\tau = \tau E_1 \tau \quad \textit{on } \mathscr{D}'(M).$$

In particular, $\tau\Delta_b = \tau E_1$ on $\mathcal{P}$.

The proof of Theorem 8.1 requires many ingredients. First, we have the following immediate consequence of the commutator formulae proven by Lee [27].

Lemma 8.2. *It holds that $\overline{\Box}_b = \Box_b + 2iT + L$ for some $L \in C^\infty(M, T^{1,0}M \oplus T^{0,1}M)$.*

We need the following result given in [22, Lemma 5.7]

Lemma 8.3. *Let $A, B\colon C_0^\infty(M) \to \mathscr{D}'(M)$ be continuous operators such that the kernels of A and B satisfy*

$$A(x,y) = \int_0^\infty e^{i\varphi(x,y)s}\alpha(x,y,s)ds, \quad \alpha(x,y,s) \in S^m_{\mathrm{cl}}(M \times M \times \overline{\mathbb{R}}_+),$$
$$B(x,y) = \int_0^\infty e^{-i\overline{\varphi}(x,y)s}\beta(x,y,s)ds, \quad \beta(x,y,s) \in S^k_{\mathrm{cl}}(M \times M \times \overline{\mathbb{R}}_+)$$

for some $m, k \in \mathbb{Z}$, where $\varphi(x,y) \in C^\infty(M \times M)$ is as in Theorem 7.1. Then,

$$A \circ B \equiv 0, \quad B \circ A \equiv 0.$$

To proceed, set

$$\Sigma^- = \{(x, \lambda\theta(x)) \in T^*M;\, \lambda < 0\}, \quad \Sigma^+ = \{(x, \lambda\theta(x)) \in T^*M;\, \lambda > 0\}. \tag{8.1}$$

Let $\sigma_{\Box_b}(x,\xi)$ and $\sigma_{2iT}(x,\xi)$ be the principal symbols of $\Box_b$ and $2iT$, respectively. It is easy to see that $\sigma_{\Box_b}(x,\xi) = 0$ for all $(x,\xi) \in \Sigma^- \cup \Sigma^+$; that $\sigma_{2iT}(x,\xi) > 0$ for all $(x,\xi) \in \Sigma^-$; and that $\sigma_{2iT}(x,\xi) < 0$ for all $(x,\xi) \in \Sigma^+$. For $(x,\xi) \in T^*M$, we write $|\xi|$ to denote the point norm of the cotangent vector $\xi \in T^*_xM$. Take $\chi_0, \chi_1 \in C^\infty(T^*M, [0,1])$ such that

(1) $\chi_0 = 1$ in a small neighbourhood of $\Sigma^- \cap \{(x,\xi) \in T^*M;\, |\xi| \geq 1\}$,
(2) $\chi_1 = 1$ in a small neighbourhood of $\Sigma^+ \cap \{(x,\xi) \in T^*M;\, |\xi| \geq 1\}$,
(3) $\operatorname{supp}\chi_0 \cap \operatorname{supp}\chi_1 = \emptyset$,
(4) $\sigma_{2iT}(x,\xi) > 0$ for all $(x,\xi) \in \operatorname{supp}\chi_0$,
(5) $\sigma_{2iT}(x,\xi) < 0$ for all $(x,\xi) \in \operatorname{supp}\chi_1$, and
(6) χ_0, χ_1 are positively homogeneous of degree zero in the sense that

$$\chi_0(x,\lambda\xi) = \chi_0(x,\xi), \quad \chi_1(x,\lambda\xi) = \chi_1(x,\xi) \quad \text{for all } \lambda \geq 1 \text{ and } |\xi| \geq 1.$$

Define

$$\begin{aligned} q(x,\xi) =& (1 - \chi_0(x,\xi) - \chi_1(x,\xi))\sqrt{\sigma_{\Box_b}(x,\xi)} \\ &+ \chi_0(x,\xi)\sigma_{2iT}(x,\xi) - \chi_1(x,\xi)\sigma_{2iT}(x,\xi). \end{aligned} \tag{8.2}$$

Note that $\sigma_{\Box_b}(x,\xi) > 0$ for all $(x,\xi) \notin \Sigma^- \cup \Sigma^+$. From this observation, it is easy to see that $q(x,\xi) \geq c\,|\xi|$ for all $(x,\xi) \in T^*M$ with $|\xi| \geq 1$, where $c > 0$ is a constant. Let $\widetilde{E}_1 \in L^1_{\mathrm{cl}}(M)$ with symbol $q(x,\xi) \in C^\infty(T^*M)$. Then $\widetilde{E}_1$ is a classical elliptic pseudodifferential operator. It is known that (see [20]) $\mathrm{WF}'(S) = \mathrm{diag}(\Sigma^- \times \Sigma^-)$ and $\mathrm{WF}'(\overline{S}) = \mathrm{diag}(\Sigma^+ \times \Sigma^+)$, where

$$\mathrm{WF}'(S) = \{(x,\xi,y,\eta) \in T^*M \times T^*M\colon (x,\xi,y,-\eta) \in \mathrm{WF}(S)\}$$

and $\mathrm{WF}(S)$ denotes the wave front set of S in the sense of Hörmander [19, Chapter 8]. Recall that S denotes the Szegő projection. From this observation and (8.2), it is not difficult to see that

$$S\widetilde{E}_1 \equiv S(2iT), \quad \widetilde{E}_1 S \equiv (2iT)S, \quad \overline{S}\widetilde{E}_1 \equiv \overline{S}(-2iT), \quad \widetilde{E}_1\overline{S} \equiv (-2iT)\overline{S}. \tag{8.3}$$

Alternatively, (8.3) can be checked directly from the fact that $d_x\varphi|_{x=y} = -\theta(x)$. Now, we can prove the following theorem.

Theorem 8.4. *With the notations above, there is an $\widetilde{E}_0 \in L^0_{\mathrm{cl}}(M)$ such that*

$$S\Delta_b S \equiv S(\widetilde{E}_1 + \widetilde{E}_0)S \quad \text{and} \quad \overline{S}\Delta_b\overline{S} \equiv \overline{S}(\widetilde{E}_1 + \widetilde{E}_0)\overline{S}.$$

Proof. From Lemma 8.2, (8.3), and the observation that $\Box_b S = 0$, we have

$$S\Delta_b S = S(2iT + L)S = S\widetilde{E}_1 S + SLS + F_0, \tag{8.4}$$

where $F_0 \equiv 0$. We write $L = U + \overline{V}$ for $U, V \in C^\infty(M, T^{1,0}M)$. Since $\overline{\partial}_b S = 0$, we have

$$S\overline{V}S = 0. \tag{8.5}$$

Now,

$$(SUS)^* = SU^*S = S(-\overline{U} + r)S = SrS,$$

where $(SUS)^*$ and U^* are the adjoints of SUS and S respectively and $r \in C^\infty(M)$. Hence,

$$SUS = S\overline{r}S. \tag{8.6}$$

From (8.4), (8.5) and (8.6), we conclude that

$$S\Delta_b S = S(\widetilde{E}_1 + g_0)S + F_0, \tag{8.7}$$

where $g_0 \in C^\infty(M)$, $F_0 \equiv 0$. Similarly,

$$\overline{S}\Delta_b \overline{S} = \overline{S}(\widetilde{E}_1 + g_1)\overline{S} + F_1, \tag{8.8}$$

where $g_1 \in C^\infty(M)$ and $F_1 \equiv 0$. Put

$$\widetilde{E}_0 = \chi_0(x, \xi)g_0 + \chi_1(x, \xi)g_1,$$

where χ_0, χ_1 are as in (8.2). As in the discussion before (8.3), we have

$$Sg_0S \equiv S\widetilde{E}_0S, \quad \overline{S}g_1\overline{S} \equiv \overline{S}\widetilde{E}_0\overline{S}. \tag{8.9}$$

The desired conclusion follows from (8.7), (8.8) and (8.9). □

Proof of Theorem 8.1. From Theorem 8.4 and (7.2), we have

(8.10)
$$\begin{aligned}
\tau\Delta_b\tau &= (S + \overline{S})\Delta_b(S + \overline{S}) + G_0 \\
&= S\Delta_b S + \overline{S}\Delta_b\overline{S} + S\Delta_b\overline{S} + \overline{S}\Delta_b S + G_0 \\
&= S(\widetilde{E}_1 + \widetilde{E}_0)S + \overline{S}(\widetilde{E}_1 + \widetilde{E}_0)\overline{S} + S\Delta_b\overline{S} + \overline{S}\Delta_b S + G_1 \\
&= (S + \overline{S})(\widetilde{E}_1 + \widetilde{E}_0)(S + \overline{S}) - S(\widetilde{E}_1 + \widetilde{E}_0)\overline{S} - \overline{S}(\widetilde{E}_1 + \widetilde{E}_0)S \\
&\quad + S\Delta_b\overline{S} + \overline{S}\Delta_b S + G_1 \\
&= \tau(\widetilde{E}_1 + \widetilde{E}_0)\tau - S(\widetilde{E}_1 + \widetilde{E}_0)\overline{S} - \overline{S}(\widetilde{E}_1 + \widetilde{E}_0)S + S\Delta_b\overline{S} + \overline{S}\Delta_b S + G_2,
\end{aligned}$$

where G_0, G_1, G_2 are smoothing operators. In view of Lemma 8.3 and Theorem 7.2, we see that $S(\widetilde{E}_1 + \widetilde{E}_0)\overline{S}$, $\overline{S}(\widetilde{E}_1 + \widetilde{E}_0)S$, $S\Delta_b\overline{S}$ and $\overline{S}\Delta_b S$ are smoothing. From this and (8.10), we get

$$\tau\Delta_b\tau = \tau(\widetilde{E}_1 + \widetilde{E}_0)\tau + G,$$

where G is smoothing. Hence,

$$\tau\Delta_b\tau = \tau^2\Delta_b\tau^2 = \tau^2(\widetilde{E}_1 + \widetilde{E}_0)\tau^2 + \tau G\tau = \tau(\widetilde{E}_1 + \widetilde{E}_0 + G)\tau. \tag{8.11}$$

Put $E_1 = \widetilde{E}_1 + \widetilde{E}_0 + G \in L^1_{\mathrm{cl}}(M)$. From (8.11), we get $\tau\Delta_b\tau = \tau E_1\tau$. The theorem follows. □

9. The Green's function of square root of $\overline{P}'_4$

In this section, we will prove Theorem 1.3. First, we can repeat the proof of Theorem 8.1 with minor change and get the following result.

Theorem 9.1. *We have*

$$\overline{P}'_4 = \tau\big((2E_1)^2 + \hat{E}_1\big) \quad \text{on } \mathcal{P},$$

where $E_1 \in L^1_{\mathrm{cl}}(M)$ is as in Theorem 8.1 and $\hat{E}_1 \in L^1_{\mathrm{cl}}(M)$.

In particular, $\overline{P}'_4$ is an elliptic pseudodifferential operator on $\mathcal{P}$. Standard arguments for elliptic operators imply that the spectrum $\operatorname{Spec}\overline{P}'_4$ of $\overline{P}'_4$ is a discrete subset of $(-\infty,\infty)$ such that every $\lambda \in \operatorname{Spec}\overline{P}'_4$ is an eigenvalue of $\overline{P}'_4$ and the eigenspace

$$\mathcal{E}_\lambda(\overline{P}'_4) := \Big\{u \in \operatorname{Dom}\overline{P}'_4 \colon \overline{P}'_4 u = \lambda u\Big\}$$

is a finite dimensional subspace of $\mathcal{P}$.

Let

$$\pi \colon \hat{\mathcal{P}} \to \operatorname{Ker}\overline{P}'_4$$

be the orthogonal projection. Let $\{g_1, g_2, \dots, g_d\} \subset \mathcal{P}$ be an orthonormal frame for $\operatorname{Ker}\overline{P}'_4$, where $d \in \mathbb{N}_0$. Then

$$\pi(x,y) = \sum_{j=1}^{d} g_j(x)\overline{g}_j(y) \in C^\infty(M\times M). \tag{9.1}$$

From (9.1), we can extend π to $\mathscr{D}'(M)$ as a smoothing operator on M.

Assume that $\overline{P}'_4$ is nonnegative. Then $\operatorname{Spec}\overline{P}'_4 \subset [0,\infty)$ and $\overline{P}'_4$ has a well-defined square root

$$\big(\overline{P}'_4\big)^{\frac12} \colon \operatorname{Dom}\big(\overline{P}'_4\big)^{\frac12} \subset \hat{\mathcal{P}} \to \hat{\mathcal{P}}.$$

Note that $\operatorname{Dom}\big(\overline{P}'_4\big)^{\frac12} = \operatorname{Dom}\overline{P}'_4$. We write

$$\big(\overline{P}'_4\big)^{-\frac12} \colon \hat{\mathcal{P}} \to \operatorname{Dom}\big(\overline{P}'_4\big)^{\frac12}$$

to denote the Green's function of $\big(\overline{P}'_4\big)^{\frac12}$. That is,

$$\begin{aligned} &\big(\overline{P}'_4\big)^{\frac12} \circ \big(\overline{P}'_4\big)^{-\frac12} + \pi = I \quad \text{on } \hat{\mathcal{P}}, \\ &\big(\overline{P}'_4\big)^{-\frac12} \circ \big(\overline{P}'_4\big)^{\frac12} + \pi = I \quad \text{on } \operatorname{Dom}\big(\overline{P}'_4\big)^{\frac12}. \end{aligned} \tag{9.2}$$

For every $t > 0$, the operator

$$\overline{P}'_4 + t + \pi \colon \operatorname{Dom}\overline{P}'_4 \to \hat{\mathcal{P}}$$

has a continuous inverse

$$(\overline{P}'_4 + t + \pi)^{-1} \colon \hat{\mathcal{P}} \to \hat{\mathcal{P}}$$

and the operator $(\overline{P}'_4 + t + \pi)^{-1}$ depends continuously on t. Let $\lambda_1 > 0$ be the first non-zero eigenvalue of $\overline{P}'_4$. Then

$$\begin{aligned} \Big\|(\overline{P}'_4 + t + \pi)^{-1}u\Big\| &\le \frac{1}{\lambda_1 + t}\left\|(I-\pi)u\right\| + \frac{1}{1+t}\left\|\pi u\right\| \\ &\le \frac{1}{\min\{\lambda_1, 1\} + t}\left\|u\right\| \end{aligned} \tag{9.3}$$

for all $u \in \hat{\mathcal{P}}$. $\left(\overline{P}_4'\right)^{-1/2}$ can be understood as follows.

Lemma 9.2. *On $\hat{\mathcal{P}} \cap (\operatorname{Ker} \overline{P}_4')^{\perp}$, we have*

$$\left(\overline{P}_4'\right)^{-\frac{1}{2}} = c \int_0^\infty t^{-\frac{1}{2}} (\overline{P}_4' + t + \pi)^{-1} dt,$$

where $c^{-1} = \int_0^\infty t^{-\frac{1}{2}} (1+t)^{-1} dt$.

Proof. Fix a positive eigenvalue $\lambda \in \operatorname{Spec} \overline{P}_4'$. Let $u \in \mathcal{E}_\lambda(\overline{P}_4')$. Then,

$$\left(\overline{P}_4'\right)^{-\frac{1}{2}} u = \frac{1}{\sqrt{\lambda}} u. \tag{9.4}$$

We compute that

$$\left(c \int_0^\infty t^{-\frac{1}{2}} (\mathrm{P}_0' + t + \pi)^{-1} dt\right) u = cu \int_0^\infty t^{-\frac{1}{2}} \frac{1}{\lambda + t} dt = \frac{1}{\sqrt{\lambda}} u. \tag{9.5}$$

Hence the conclusion is true on $\mathcal{E}_\lambda(\overline{P}_4')$ for all $\lambda \in \operatorname{Spec} \overline{P}_4'$.

Let $u \in \hat{\mathcal{P}} \cap (\operatorname{Ker} \overline{P}_4')^{\perp}$. For each $N \in \mathbb{N}$, let u_N be the orthogonal projection of u onto $\bigoplus_{\lambda \leq N} \mathcal{E}_\lambda(\overline{P}_4')$. It follows that $u_N \to u$ and that $\left(\overline{P}_4'\right)^{-\frac{1}{2}} u_N \to \left(\overline{P}_4'\right)^{-\frac{1}{2}} u$. From (9.3), we have

$$c\Big(\int_0^\infty t^{-\frac{1}{2}} (\overline{P}_4' + t + \pi)^{-1} dt\Big) u_N \to c\Big(\int_0^\infty t^{-\frac{1}{2}} (P_4' + t + \pi)^{-1} dt\Big) u$$

in $\hat{\mathcal{P}}$ as $N \to \infty$. Together these observations yield the result. $\square$

To proceed, we require some additional symbol spaces.

Definition 9.3. Let m be real number. The class $S^m_{1,0,d}(T^*M, \mathbb{R}_+)$ consists of all functions $a(x,\xi,t) \in C^\infty(T^*M \times \mathbb{R}_+)$ such that for arbitrary multi-indices $\alpha, \beta \in \mathbb{N}_0^3$, and for any compact set $K \subset M$ there exists $C_{\alpha,\beta,K} > 0$ such that $\left|\partial_x^\alpha \partial_\xi^\beta a(x,\xi,t)\right| \leq C_{\alpha,\beta,K} (1 + |\xi| + |t|^{\frac{1}{d}})^{m-|\beta|}$ for all $(x,\xi) \in T^*K$, $t \in \mathbb{R}_+$. Denote

$$S^{-\infty}(T^*M, \mathbb{R}_+) = \bigcap_{m \in \mathbb{R}} S^m_{1,0,d}(T^*M, \mathbb{R}_+).$$

Let $a_j \in S^{m_j}_{1,0,d}(T^*M, \mathbb{R}_+)$ for $j \in \{0,1,2,\dots\}$ with $m_j \to -\infty$ as $j \to \infty$. Then there exists $a \in S^{m_0}_{1,0,d}(T^*M, \mathbb{R}_+)$, unique modulo $S^{-\infty}(T^*M, \mathbb{R}_+)$, such that $a - \sum_{j=1}^{k-1} a_j \in S^{m_k}_{1,0,d}(T^*M, \mathbb{R}_+)$ for $k \in \{0,1,2,\dots\}$. If a and a_j have the properties above, we write

$$a \sim \sum_{j=0}^\infty a_j \text{ in } S^{m_0}_{1,0,d}(T^*M, \mathbb{R}_+).$$

Let $S^m_{\mathrm{cl},d}(T^*M, \mathbb{R}_+)$ be the space of all symbols $a(x,\xi,t) \in S^m_{1,0,d}(T^*M, \mathbb{R}_+)$ with $a(x,\xi,t) \sim \sum_{j=0}^\infty a_{m-j}(x,\xi,t)$ in $S^m_{1,0,d}(T^*M, \mathbb{R}_+)$, where $a_{m-j}(x,\xi,t)$ is positively homogeneous of degree $m-j$ in $(\xi, t^{\frac{1}{d}})$; i.e.

$$a_{m-j}(x, \lambda\xi, \lambda^d t) = \lambda^{m-j} a_{m-j}(x,\xi,t), \quad \text{for } t \in \mathbb{R}_+,\ \lambda \geq 1,\ |\xi| \geq 1.$$

Let $a(x,\xi,t) \in S^m_{\mathrm{cl},d}(T^*M,\mathbb{R}_+)$. We construct a pseudodifferential operator P_t, depending smoothly on t, by

$$(P_t u)(x) = \frac{1}{(2\pi)^3}\int e^{i<x-y,\xi>}a(x,\xi,t)u(y)dyd\xi \quad \text{for all } u \in C^\infty(M).$$

We call $a(x,\xi,t)$ the symbol of P_t and $a_m(x,\xi,t)$ the principal symbol of P_t. In this case, we will write $P_t \in L^m_{\mathrm{cl},d}(M,\mathbb{R}_+)$.

Let $P_t \in L^{-2}_{\mathrm{cl},2}(M,\mathbb{R}_+)$. Then $P_t\colon H^s(M) \to H^{s+2}(M)$ is continuous for all $s \in \mathbb{Z}$ and all $t \in \mathbb{R}_+$. Let $f(t)$ be a strictly positive continuous function. We write

$$P_t = O(f(t))\colon H^{s_1}(M) \to H^{s_2}(M), \quad s_1, s_2 \in \mathbb{Z},$$

if $\|P_t u\|_{s_2} \leq Cf(t)\|u\|_{s_1}$ for all $u \in H^{s_1}(M)$ and all $t \in \mathbb{R}_+$, where $\|\cdot\|_s$ denotes the standard Sobolev norm of order s and $C > 0$ is a constant independent of t.

We return to our situation. Put

$$E_2 = (2E_1)^2 + \hat{E}_1, \tag{9.6}$$

where $E_1, \hat{E}_1 \in L^1_{\mathrm{cl}}(M)$ are as in Theorem 9.1. Let $e_2(x,\xi) \in S^2_{\mathrm{cl}}(T^*M)$ be the principal symbol of E_2. The following is well-known [30, Chapter 2].

Theorem 9.4. *There exists $G_t \in L^{-2}_{\mathrm{cl},2}(M,\mathbb{R}_+)$ depending continuously on t in $L^2(M)$ such that*

$$G_t = O(\frac{1}{1+t})\colon H^s(M) \to H^s(M) \qquad \textit{for all } s \in \mathbb{Z}, \tag{9.7}$$

$$G_t = O(\frac{1}{\sqrt{1+t}})\colon H^s(M) \to H^{s+1}(M) \qquad \textit{for all } s \in \mathbb{Z}, \tag{9.8}$$

$$G_t = O(1)\colon H^s(M) \to H^{s+2}(M) \qquad \textit{for all } s \in \mathbb{Z}, \tag{9.9}$$

$$g_0(x,\xi,t) = \frac{1}{e_2(x,\xi)+t} \qquad \textit{for all } |\xi| \geq 1, \tag{9.10}$$

$$(E_2 + t)G_t = I + F_t \qquad \textit{for all } t > 0, \tag{9.11}$$

where $g_0(x,\xi,t)$ denotes the principal symbol of G_t and F_t is a smoothing operator on M depending smoothly on t with the property that for all $m \in \mathbb{N}_0$, there is a constant $C_m > 0$ such that for all $t \in \mathbb{R}_+$,

$$|F_t(x,y)|_{C^m(M\times M)} \leq C_m\frac{1}{1+t}. \tag{9.12}$$

Moreover, in local coordinates x, let $g(x,\xi,t)$ denote the full symbol of G_t. Then, for every $\alpha,\beta \in \mathbb{N}^3_0$, there is a constant $C_{\alpha,\beta} > 0$, independent of t, such that

$$\left|\partial^\alpha_x\partial^\beta_\xi g(x,\xi,t)\right| \leq C_{\alpha,\beta}\frac{1}{\sqrt{1+t}}(1+|\xi|)^{-1-|\beta|} \quad \textit{for all } |\xi| \geq 1, \tag{9.13}$$

$$\left|\partial^\alpha_x\partial^\beta_\xi g(x,\xi,t)\right| \leq C_{\alpha,\beta}\frac{1}{1+t}(1+|\xi|)^{-|\beta|} \quad \textit{for all } |\xi| \geq 1. \tag{9.14}$$

We introduce some notations. Let $\vartheta(x,y)$ denote the Carnot–Carathéodory distance on $(M^3, T^{1,0}M, \theta)$. Let (z,t) be CR normal coordinates defined in a neighborhood of $p \in M$ such that $(z(p),t(p)) = (0,0)$. Define $\rho^4(z,t) = |z|^4 + t^2$. It is easy to see (cf. [23, Section 3]) that for points x sufficiently close to p, we have

$$\vartheta(x,p) \simeq \rho(x).$$

Denote by $B(x,r)$ the non-isotropic ball $\{y \in M : \vartheta(x,y) < r\}$ of radius r centered at x. Let $k \in \mathbb{N}$. We denote by ∇_b^k any differential operator of the form $L_1 \dots L_k$, where $L_j \in C^\infty(M, T^{1,0}M \oplus T^{0,1}M)$ satisfy $\langle L_j \mid L_j \rangle \leq 1$ for $j = 1, \dots, k$.

Next, we define a class of (non-isotropic) smoothing operators of order j. For our purposes, it suffices to restrict to the case when $0 \leq j < 4$.

Recall that a smooth function ϕ on M is said to be a *normalized bump function* on $B(x,r)$ if $\operatorname{supp} \phi \subset B(x,r)$ and

$$\left\|\nabla_b^k \phi\right\|_{L^\infty(B(x,r))} \leq C_k r^{-k} \tag{9.15}$$

for all $k \geq 0$; here $C_k > 0$ are absolute constants independent of r. If (9.15) only holds for $0 \leq k \leq N$ for some large integer N, we say that ϕ is a normalized bump function of order N in $B(x,r)$.

Suppose that A is a continuous linear operator $A\colon C^\infty(M) \to C^\infty(M)$ and its adjoint A^* is also a continuous map $A^*\colon C^\infty(M) \to C^\infty(M)$. We say that A is a smoothing operator of order j, $0 \leq j < 4$, if

(1) there exists a kernel $A(x,y)$, defined and smooth away from the diagonal in $M \times M$, such that

$$Af(x) = \int_M A(x,y) f(y) dv_M(y) \tag{9.16}$$

for any $f \in C^\infty(M)$, and every $x \notin \operatorname{supp} f$, where $dv_M = \theta \wedge d\theta$;

(2) for all $x \neq y$, the kernel $A(x,y)$ satisfies

$$|(\nabla_b)_x^{\alpha_1} (\nabla_b)_y^{\alpha_2} A(x,y)| \lesssim_\alpha \vartheta(x,y)^{-4+j-|\alpha|} \quad \text{for all } |\alpha| = |\alpha_1| + |\alpha_2|;$$

(3) the operators A and A^* satisfy the following cancellation conditions of order j: if ϕ is a normalized bump function in $B(x,r)$, then

$$\|\nabla_b^\alpha A\phi\|_{L^\infty(B(x,r))} \lesssim_\alpha r^{j-|\alpha|},$$
$$\|\nabla_b^\alpha A^*\phi\|_{L^\infty(B(x,r))} \lesssim_\alpha r^{j-|\alpha|}.$$

Since M is embeddable, $\Box_b$ has L^2 closed range. Let

$$N\colon L^2(M) \to \operatorname{Dom} \Box_b \tag{9.17}$$

be the partial inverse of $\Box_b$ and let $N(x,y)$ be the distributional kernel of N. The following is well-known (see [23, Theorem 2.2])

Theorem 9.5. *The Szegő projection S and the partial inverse N of $\Box_b$ are smoothing operators of orders 0 and 2, respectively.*

We also need to study one-parameter families of smooth operators.

Definition 9.6. Let A_t be a t-dependent smoothing operator of order j, $0 \leq j < 4$, where $t \in \mathbb{R}_+$. Let $f(t)$ be a positive continuous function of $t \in \mathbb{R}_+$. We say that A_t is a smoothing operator of order j with size $f(t)$ if for every $m \in \mathbb{N}_0$ and any normalized bump function ϕ in $B(x,r)$, there are constants $C_m, C_{m,r} > 0$, independent of t, such that for all $t \in \mathbb{R}_+$,

$$|(\nabla_b)_x^{\alpha_1} (\nabla_b)_y^{\alpha_2} A_t(x,y)| \leq C_m f(t) \vartheta(x,y)^{-4+j-|\alpha|} \quad \text{for all } |\alpha| = |\alpha_1| + |\alpha_2| \leq m,$$
$$\|\nabla_b^\alpha A_t \phi\|_{L^\infty(B(x,r))} \leq f(t) C_{m,r} r^{j-|\alpha|} \quad \text{for all } |\alpha| \leq m,$$
$$\|\nabla_b^\alpha A_t^* \phi\|_{L^\infty(B(x,r))} \leq f(t) C_{m,r} r^{j-|\alpha|} \quad \text{for all } |\alpha| \leq m.$$

We also need the following result [23, Theorem 2.2 and Theorem 2.3].

Theorem 9.7. *Let A_t and B_t be t-dependent smoothing operators of orders j_1 and j_2 with sizes $f(t)$ and $g(t)$, respectively, where $j_1, j_2 \geq 0$, $j_1 + j_2 < 4$, and $f(t), g(t)$ are positive continuous functions. Then $A_t \circ B_t$ is a smoothing operator of order $j_1 + j_2$ with size $f(t)g(t)$.*

Let $P_t \in L^{-2}_{\mathrm{cl},2}(M, \mathbb{R}_+)$, $Q_t \in L^{-1}_{\mathrm{cl},2}(M, \mathbb{R}_+)$, and $R_t \in L^{0}_{\mathrm{cl},2}(M, \mathbb{R}_+)$. Let $p(x, \xi, t)$, $q(x, \xi, t)$ and $r(x, \xi, t)$ be symbols of P_t, Q_t and R_t respectively. It is easy to see that for every $\alpha, \beta \in \mathbb{N}_0^3$, there is a constant $C_{\alpha,\beta} > 0$ independent of t such that

$$\begin{aligned} \left|\partial_x^\alpha \partial_\xi^\beta p(x, \xi, t)\right| &\leq C_{\alpha,\beta} \frac{1}{1+t} (1 + |\xi|)^{-|\beta|} \quad \text{for all } |\xi| \geq 1, \\ \left|\partial_x^\alpha \partial_\xi^\beta q(x, \xi, t)\right| &\leq C_{\alpha,\beta} \frac{1}{\sqrt{1+t}} (1 + |\xi|)^{-|\beta|} \quad \text{for all } |\xi| \geq 1, \\ \left|\partial_x^\alpha \partial_\xi^\beta r(x, \xi, t)\right| &\leq C_{\alpha,\beta} (1 + |\xi|)^{-|\beta|} \quad \text{for all } |\xi| \geq 1. \end{aligned} \tag{9.18}$$

Using the following lemma, we establish an analogue of Theorem 9.5.

Lemma 9.8. *Consider $B(x, r)$, where $x \in M$ and $r > 0$ is a small constant. Let $\chi_r \in C_0^\infty((B(x, 2r))$ be a normalized bump function on $B(x, 2r)$ with $\chi_r \equiv 1$ on $B(x, r)$. There is a constant $C > 0$ independent of r such that*

$$\|f\|_{L^\infty(B(x,r))} \leq Cr \sum_{j=0}^{3} \left\| \nabla_b^j (\chi_r f) \right\| \quad \text{for all } f \in C^\infty(M). \tag{9.19}$$

Proof. Consider $\Delta_b + I \colon \mathrm{Dom}\,(\Delta_b + I) \subset L^2(M) \to L^2(M)$, where $\mathrm{Dom}\,(\Delta_b + I) = \left\{ u \in L^2(M) \colon (\Delta_b + I)u \in L^2(M) \right\}$. It is clear that $\Delta_b + I$ is injective, self-adjoint, has L^2 closed range and hence is surjective. Let $H \colon L^2(M) \to \mathrm{Dom}\,(\Delta_b + I)$ be the inverse of $\Delta_b + I$. Put $B := H^2 \colon L^2(M) \to L^2(M)$. We have

$$B(\Delta_b + I)^2 = I \quad \text{on } C^\infty(M). \tag{9.20}$$

It is known that (see [23, Appendix A])

$$\begin{aligned} &B \text{ is a smoothing operator of order } 4 - \varepsilon \text{ for every } \varepsilon > 0, \\ &B\nabla_b \text{ is a smoothing operator of order } 3. \end{aligned} \tag{9.21}$$

Let $f \in C^\infty(M)$. From (9.20), we have

$$\chi_r f = B(\Delta_b + I)^2 \chi_r f = \sum_{j=0}^{4} B \nabla_b^j \chi_r f. \tag{9.22}$$

Fix $x_0 \in B(x, r)$. From (9.22), we have

$$\begin{aligned} f(x_0) = (\chi_r f)(x_0) &= (B\nabla_b^4 \chi_r f)(x_0) + \sum_{j=0}^{3} (B\nabla_b^j \chi_r f)(x_0) \\ &= \int (B\nabla_b)(x_0, y) \nabla_b^3 (\chi_r f)(y) dv_M(y) + \sum_{j=0}^{3} \int B(x_0, y) \nabla_b^j (\chi_r f)(y) dv_M(y), \end{aligned}$$

where $(B\nabla_b)(x,y)$ and $B(x,y)$ denote the distribution kernels of $B\nabla_b$ and B respectively. We then check that

$$\begin{aligned}|f(x_0)| \leq &\Big(\int_{B(x_0,2r)} |(B\nabla_b)(x_0,y)|^2\, dv_M(y)\Big)^{\frac{1}{2}} \left\|\nabla_b^3(\chi_r f)\right\| \\ &+ \sum_{j=0}^{3}\Big(\int_{B(x_0,2r)} |B(x_0,y)|^2\, dv_M(y)\Big)^{\frac{1}{2}} \left\|\nabla_b^j(\chi_r f)\right\|.\end{aligned} \tag{9.23}$$

From (9.21), we can check that

$$\begin{aligned}&\int_{B(x_0,2r)} |(B\nabla_b)(x_0,y)|^2\, dv_M(y) \leq C_0 \int_{B(x_0,2r)} \vartheta(x_0,y)^{-2} dy \leq C_1 r^2,\\ &\int_{B(x_0,2r)} |B(x_0,y)|^2\, dv_M(y) \leq C_2 \int_{B(x_0,2r)} \vartheta(x_0,y)^{-2} dy \leq C_3 r^2,\end{aligned} \tag{9.24}$$

where C_0, C_1, C_2, C_3 are positive constants independent of r and the point x_0. From (9.24) and (9.23), (9.19) follows. □

Theorem 9.9. *The operators SP_t, SQ_t and SR_t are smoothing operators of orders 0 with sizes $\frac{1}{1+t}$, $\frac{1}{\sqrt{1+t}}$ and 1, respectively. Similarly, the operators P_tS, Q_tS and R_tS are smoothing operators of orders 0 with sizes $\frac{1}{1+t}$, $\frac{1}{\sqrt{1+t}}$ and 1, respectively.*

Proof. Let ϕ be a normalized bump function in the ball $B(x,r)$. From (9.19), we have

$$\|SQ_t\phi\|_{L^\infty(B(x,r))} \leq Cr\sum_{j=0}^{3}\left\|\nabla_b^j(\chi_r SQ_t\phi)\right\|, \tag{9.25}$$

where χ_r is as in Lemma 9.8 and $C>0$ is a constant independent of r, ϕ, x and t. We claim that

$$\left\|\nabla_b^j SQ_t\phi\right\| \leq c_j\frac{1}{\sqrt{1+t}}r^{2-j} \text{for } j=0,1,2,3,4, \tag{9.26}$$

where $c_j>0$ is a constant independent of r, x and t. Fix $j\in\{0,1,2,3,4\}$. It is known that (see [20, 31])

$$\nabla_b^{2j}S\colon H^s(M)\to H^{s-j}(M) \quad \text{for all } s\in\mathbb{Z}. \tag{9.27}$$

Moreover, from (9.18), we can check that

$$Q_t = O(\frac{1}{\sqrt{1+t}})\colon H^s(M)\to H^s(M) \quad \text{for all } s\in\mathbb{Z}. \tag{9.28}$$

From (9.27) and (9.28), we deduce that

$$\nabla_b^{2j}SQ_t = O(\frac{1}{\sqrt{1+t}})\colon H^s(M)\to H^{s-j}(M) \quad \text{for all } s\in\mathbb{Z}. \tag{9.29}$$

From (9.29), we have

$$\begin{aligned}\left\|\nabla_b^j SQ_t\phi\right\|^2 &= (\,\nabla_b^j SQ_t\phi \,|\, \nabla_b^j SQ_t\phi\,) = (\,\nabla_b^{2j} SQ_t\phi \,|\, SQ_t\phi\,)\\ &\lesssim \left\|\nabla_b^{2j} SQ_t\phi\right\| \|SQ_t\phi\|\\ &\lesssim \frac{1}{1+t}\|\phi\|_j\|\phi\|\\ &\lesssim \frac{1}{1+t}\left\|\nabla_b^{2j}\phi\right\|\|\phi\|\\ &\lesssim \frac{1}{1+t}r^{4-2j},\end{aligned}\tag{9.30}$$

where $\|\phi\|_j$ denotes the standard Sobolev norm of ϕ of order j. From (9.30), the claim (9.26) follows.

From (9.25) and (9.26) we can check that

$$\begin{aligned}\|SQ_t\phi\|_{L^\infty(B(x,r))} &\lesssim r\sum_{j=0}^{3}\left\|\nabla_b^j(\chi_r SQ_t\phi)\right\|\\ &\lesssim r\|\chi_r SQ_t\phi\| + r\sum_{j=1}^{3}\sum_{s=0}^{j} r^{-j+s}\|\nabla_b^s(SQ_t\phi)\|\\ &\lesssim r\frac{1}{\sqrt{1+t}} + r\sum_{j=1}^{3}\sum_{s=0}^{j} r^{-j+s}\frac{1}{\sqrt{1+t}}r^{2-s}\\ &\lesssim \frac{1}{\sqrt{1+t}}.\end{aligned}$$

We can repeat the method above with minor changes and get that for every $j\in\mathbb{N}_0$, $\left\|\nabla_b^j SQ_t\phi\right\| \lesssim_j \frac{1}{\sqrt{1+t}}r^{-j}$. Thus, SQ_t satisfies the cancellation condition of order 0 with size $\frac{1}{\sqrt{1+t}}$. Similarly, we can repeat the procedure above with minor change and obtain that $(SQ_t)^*$ satisfies the cancellation condition of order 0 with size $\frac{1}{\sqrt{1+t}}$.

Now, we estimate the kernel $SQ_t(x,y)$. Let $x=(x_1,x_2,x_3)$ be local coordinates for M defined in an open set $D\subset M$. From Theorem 7.2 and the complex stationary phase formula of Melin–Sjöstrand [28], it follows that

$$(SQ_t)(x,y) = \int_0^\infty e^{i\varphi(x,y)s}b(x,y,s,t)ds + F_t(x,y) \ \text{ on } D\times D,\tag{9.31}$$

where $b(x,y,s,t)\in C^\infty(D\times D\times\mathbb{R}_+\times\mathbb{R}_+)$, and for every $\alpha,\beta\in\mathbb{N}_0^3$, $\gamma\in\mathbb{N}_0$, there is a constant $C_{\alpha,\beta,\gamma}>0$, independent of t, such that on $D\times D$,

$$\begin{cases}\left|\partial_x^\alpha\partial_y^\beta\partial_s^\gamma b(x,y,s,t)\right| \le C_{\alpha,\beta,\gamma}(\sqrt{s^2+t})^{-\gamma}, & \text{if } \gamma\ge 1\\ \left|\partial_x^\alpha\partial_y^\beta b(x,y,s,t)\right| \le C_{\alpha,\beta,\gamma}(\frac{s}{\sqrt{s^2+t}}), & \text{if } \gamma = 0,\end{cases}\tag{9.32}$$

and F_t is a smoothing operator on D depending smoothly on t with the property that for all $m\in\mathbb{N}_0$, there is a constant $C_m>0$ such that for all $t\in\mathbb{R}_+$,

$$|F_t(x,y)|_{C^m(M\times M)} \le C_m\frac{1}{\sqrt{1+t}}.$$

From (9.32), the formula

$$\int_0^\infty e^{i\varphi(x,y)s} b(x,y,s,t)ds = \int_0^\infty \frac{1}{(i\varphi(x,y))^2} \frac{\partial^2}{\partial s^2}(e^{i\varphi(x,y)s}) b(x,y,s,t)ds,$$

and distribution theory, one can check that

$$\begin{aligned}\int_0^\infty & e^{i\varphi(x,y)s} b(x,y,s,t)ds \\ &= \int_0^\infty \frac{1}{(i\varphi(x,y))^2} e^{i\varphi(x,y)s} \frac{\partial^2}{\partial s^2} b(x,y,s,t)ds + \frac{1}{(i\varphi(x,y))^2} H_t(x,y),\end{aligned} \tag{9.33}$$

where H_t is a smoothing operator on D depending smoothly on t with the property that for all $m \in \mathbb{N}_0$, there is a constant $\widetilde{C}_m > 0$ such that for all $t \in \mathbb{R}_+$,

$$|H_t(x,y)|_{C^m(M\times M)} \leq \widetilde{C}_m \frac{1}{\sqrt{1+t}}.$$

Again, from (9.32), we have

$$\begin{aligned}\left| \int_0^\infty \frac{1}{(i\varphi(x,y))^2} e^{i\varphi(x,y)s} \frac{\partial^2}{\partial s^2} b(x,y,s,t)ds \right| &\leq \hat{C} \frac{1}{|\varphi(x,y)|^2} \int_0^\infty \frac{1}{s^2+t} ds \\ &\leq \hat{C}_1 \frac{1}{\sqrt{1+t}} \frac{1}{|\varphi(x,y)|^2},\end{aligned} \tag{9.34}$$

for all $t \geq 1$, where $\hat{C} > 0$, $\hat{C}_1 > 0$ are constants independent of t. It is known that (see [20, Theorem 1.4]) $|\varphi(x,y)| \approx \vartheta(x,y)^2$. From this observation, (9.33) and (9.34), we conclude that

$$|(SQ_t)(x,y)| \leq C \frac{1}{\sqrt{1+t}} \vartheta(x,y)^{-4}$$

for all $x, y \in M$ with $x \neq y$, where $C > 0$ is a constant independent of t.

For every $m \in \mathbb{N}$, we can repeat the procedure above with minor change and deduce that there is a constant $C_m > 0$ independent of t such that

$$|(\nabla_b)_x^{\alpha_1} (\nabla_b)_y^{\alpha_2} (SQ_t)(x,y)| \leq C_m \frac{1}{\sqrt{1+t}} \vartheta(x,y)^{-4-|\alpha|}$$

for all $|\alpha| = |\alpha_1| + |\alpha_2| \leq m$. Thus, SQ_t is a smoothing operator of order 0 with size $\frac{1}{\sqrt{1+t}}$.

Arguing similarly yields that SP_t and SR_t are smoothing operators of orders 0 with sizes $\frac{1}{1+t}$ and 1, respectively. $\square$

We need two results about the smoothing properties of the operators G_t from Theorem 9.4.

Lemma 9.10. *Let $G_t \in L^{-2}_{\mathrm{cl},2}(M, \mathbb{R}_+)$ be as in Theorem 9.4. Then, $\tau G_t \tau$ is a smoothing operator of order 2 with size $\frac{1}{\sqrt{1+t}}$. Moreover, $\tau G_t \tau$ is also a smoothing operators of order 0 with size $\frac{1}{1+t}$.*

Proof. From Theorem 7.1, Lemma 8.3 and (9.7), it is straightforward to see that

$$\begin{aligned}\tau G_t \tau &= S G_t S + \overline{S} G_t \overline{S} + F_t \\ &= S \overline{N}\, \overline{\Box}_b G_t S + \overline{S} N \Box_b G_t \overline{S} + H_t,\end{aligned} \tag{9.35}$$

where F_t and H_t are smoothing operators on M depending smoothly on t with the property that for all $m \in \mathbb{N}_0$, there is a constant $C_m > 0$ such that for all $t \in \mathbb{R}_+$,

$$\begin{aligned} |F_t(x,y)|_{C^m(M\times M)} &\leq C_m \frac{1}{1+t}, \\ |H_t(x,y)|_{C^m(M\times M)} &\leq C_m \frac{1}{1+t}. \end{aligned} \tag{9.36}$$

Note that $\Box_b G_t, \overline{\Box}_b G_t \in L^0_{\mathrm{cl},2}(M,\mathbb{R}_+)$. From this observation, Theorem 9.7, Theorem 9.9 and (9.35), we conclude that $\tau G_t \tau$ is a smoothing operator of order 0 with size $\frac{1}{1+t}$.

From Lemma 8.2, we have

$$\begin{aligned} S\overline{N}\,\overline{\Box}_b G_t S &= S\overline{N}\Box_b G_t S + S\overline{N}EG_t S \\ &= S\overline{N}[\Box_b, G_t]S + S\overline{N}EG_t S, \end{aligned} \tag{9.37}$$

where E is a first order partial differential operator. Note that $[\Box_b, G_t], EG_t \in L^{-1}_{\mathrm{cl},2}(M,\mathbb{R}_+)$. From this observation, Theorem 9.7 and Theorem 9.9, we conclude that $S\overline{N}[\Box_b, G_t]S + S\overline{N}EG_tS$ is a smoothing operator of order 2 with size $\frac{1}{\sqrt{1+t}}$. Similarly, $\overline{S}N\Box_b G_t\overline{S}$ is a smoothing operator of order 2 with size $\frac{1}{\sqrt{1+t}}$. From (9.35), we conclude that $\tau G_t \tau$ is a smoothing operator of order 2 with size $\frac{1}{\sqrt{1+t}}$. The lemma follows. ∎

Lemma 9.11. *Let $E_2 \in L^2_{\mathrm{cl}}(M)$ be as in* (9.6)*. Then $\tau E_2(I-\tau)G_t\tau$ is a smoothing operator of order* 1 *with size* 1*.*

Proof. From Theorem 7.1, Lemma 8.3 and (9.7), we check that

$$\begin{aligned} \tau E_2(I-\tau)G_t\tau &= SE_2(I-S)G_tS + \overline{S}E_2(I-\overline{S})G_t\overline{S} + F_t \\ &= SE_2\Box_b NG_tS + \overline{S}E_2\overline{\Box}_b\,\overline{N}G_t\overline{S} + F_t, \end{aligned} \tag{9.38}$$

where F_t is a smoothing operators on M depending smoothly on t with the property that for all $m \in \mathbb{N}_0$, there is a constant $C_m > 0$ such that for all $t \in \mathbb{R}_+$,

$$|F_t(x,y)|_{C^m(M\times M)} \leq C_m \frac{1}{1+t}.$$

Again, from Theorem 7.1, Lemma 8.3 and (9.7), we check that

$$\begin{aligned} SE_2\Box_b NG_tS &= S[E_2, \overline{\partial}_b^*]\overline{\partial}_b NG_tS \\ &= S[E_2, \overline{\partial}_b^*]\overline{\partial}_b N\overline{N}^2\,\overline{\Box}_b^2 G_tS + H_t, \end{aligned} \tag{9.39}$$

where H_t is a smoothing operator on M depending smoothly on t with the property that for all $m \in \mathbb{N}_0$, there is a constant $C_m > 0$ such that for all $t \in \mathbb{R}_+$,

$$|H_t(x,y)|_{C^m(M\times M)} \leq C_m \frac{1}{1+t}.$$

From Lemma 8.2, we have

$$\begin{aligned} &S[E_2, \overline{\partial}_b^*]\overline{\partial}_b N\overline{N}^2\,\overline{\Box}_b^2 G_tS \\ &= S[E_2, \overline{\partial}_b^*]\overline{\partial}_b N\overline{N}^2\overline{\Box}_b[\Box_b, G_t]S + S[E_2, \overline{\partial}_b^*]\overline{\partial}_b N\overline{N}^2\overline{\Box}_b Z_0 S \\ &= S[E_2, \overline{\partial}_b^*]\overline{\partial}_b N\overline{N}^2[\Box_b,[\Box_b, G_t]]S + S[E_2, \overline{\partial}_b^*]\overline{\partial}_b N\overline{N}^2 Z_1[\Box_b, G_t]S \\ &\quad + S[E_2, \overline{\partial}_b^*]\overline{\partial}_b N\overline{N}^2[\Box_b, Z_0]G_tS + S[E_2, \overline{\partial}_b^*]\overline{\partial}_b N\overline{N}^2 Z_2 Z_0 G_tS, \end{aligned} \tag{9.40}$$

where Z_0, Z_1, Z_2 are first order partial differential operators. Note that

$$[\Box_b,[\Box_b,G_t]], Z_1[\Box_b,G_t], [\Box_b,Z_0]G_t, Z_2Z_0G_t \in L^0_{\mathrm{cl},2}(M,\mathbb{R}_+).$$

From this observation and Theorem 9.9, we deduce that $[\Box_b,[\Box_b,G_t]]S$, $Z_1[\Box_b,G_t]S$, $[\Box_b,Z_0]G_tS$ and $Z_2Z_0G_tS$ are smoothing operators of order 0 with sizes 1. Moreover, from the symbolic calculus of Stein–Yung [31], we check that $S[E_2,\overline{\partial}_b^*]\overline{\partial}_bN\overline{N}^2$ is a smoothing operator of order 1.

From the discussion above and (9.40), we conclude that $S[E_2,\overline{\partial}_b^*]\overline{\partial}_bN\overline{N}^2\,\overline{\Box}_b^2G_tS$ is a smoothing operator of order 1 with size 1. Similarly, we can repeat the procedure above and conclude that $\overline{S}E_2(I-\overline{S})G_t\overline{S}$ is a smoothing operator of order 1 with size 1. The lemma now follows from (9.38). $\Box$

Our first goal is to invert $\overline{P}_4'+t+\pi$. We begin by constructing a parametrix.

Proposition 9.12. *For every $N>0$, there are continuous operators*

$$A_{N,t}=O(\frac{1}{1+t})\colon H^s(M)\to H^{s+\frac12}(M)\quad \textit{for all } s\in\mathbb{Z},$$
$$R_{N,t}=O(\frac{1}{1+t})\colon H^s(M)\to H^{s+N}(M)\quad \textit{for all } s\in\mathbb{Z}$$

depending continuously on t such that

1. *$A_{K,t}$ is a smoothing operator of order 3 with size $\frac{1}{\sqrt{1+t}}$;*
2. *$A_{K,t}$ is a smoothing operator of order 1 with size $\frac{1}{1+t}$;*
3. *$(\overline{P}_4'+t+\pi)(\tau G_t\tau+\tau A_{K,t}\tau)=\tau+\tau R_{K,t}\tau$ on $\mathcal{P}$.*

Proof. From Theorem 9.1 and Theorem 9.4, we have

$$\begin{aligned}(\overline{P}_4'+t+\pi)(\tau G_t\tau)&=\tau(E_2+t)\tau G_t\tau+\pi\tau G_t\tau\\ &=\tau(E_2+t)G_t\tau-\tau E_2(I-\tau)G_t\tau+\pi\tau G_t\tau\\ &=I+\tau A_t\tau\quad\text{on } \mathcal{P},\end{aligned}\tag{9.41}$$

where

$$A_t=-\tau E_2(I-\tau)G_t\tau+\tau\widetilde{F}_t\tau.\tag{9.42}$$

Here $\widetilde{F}_t$ is a smoothing operator on M depending smoothly on t with the property that for all $m\in\mathbb{N}_0$, there is a constant $C_m>0$ such that for all $t\in\mathbb{R}_+$,

$$\left|\widetilde{F}_t(x,y)\right|_{C^m(M\times M)}\le C_m\frac{1}{1+t}.\tag{9.43}$$

By Lemma 9.11, we have that A_t is a smoothing operator of order 1 with size 1. We claim that

$$A_t=O(1):H^s(M)\to H^{s+\frac12}(M)\quad\text{for all } s\in\mathbb{Z}.\tag{9.44}$$

From (9.39) and (9.40) we see that

$$\begin{aligned}&SE_2\Box_bNG_tS\\ &=S[E_2,\overline{\partial}_b^*]\overline{\partial}_bN\overline{N}^2[\Box_b,[\Box_b,G_t]]S+S[E_2,\overline{\partial}_b^*]\overline{\partial}_bN\overline{N}^2Z_1[\Box_b,G_t]S\\ &\quad+S[E_2,\overline{\partial}_b^*]\overline{\partial}_bN\overline{N}^2[\Box_b,Z_0]G_tS+S[E_2,\overline{\partial}_b^*]\overline{\partial}_bN\overline{N}^2Z_2Z_0G_tS+H_t,\end{aligned}\tag{9.45}$$

where Z_0, Z_1, Z_2 are first order partial differential operators and H_t is a smoothing operator on M depending smoothly on t with the property that for all $m \in \mathbb{N}_0$, there is a constant $C_m > 0$ such that for all $t \in \mathbb{R}_+$,

$$|H_t(x,y)|_{C^m(M\times M)} \leq C_m \frac{1}{1+t}.$$

It is known that (see [20, 21])

$$\begin{aligned} &N, \overline{N} \colon H^s(M) \to H^{s+1}(M) \quad \text{for all } s \in \mathbb{Z}, \\ &\overline{\partial}_b N \colon H^s(M) \to H^{s+\frac{1}{2}}(M, T^{*0,1}M) \quad \text{for all } s \in \mathbb{Z}. \end{aligned}$$

From this observation, (9.9) and (9.45), we deduce that

$$SE_2\Box_b N G_t S = O(1) \colon H^s(M) \to H^{s+\frac{1}{2}}(M) \quad \text{for all } s \in \mathbb{Z}.$$

Similarly, we have $\overline{S}E_2\overline{\Box}_b\overline{N}G_t\overline{S} = O(1) : H^s(M) \to H^{s+\frac{1}{2}}(M)$ for all $s \in \mathbb{Z}$. Inserting this into (9.38) yields the claim (9.44).

Now put

$$A_{K,t} = \tau G_t \tau (I - (\tau A_t \tau) + (\tau A_t \tau)^2 - (\tau A_t \tau)^3 + \cdots + (\tau A_t \tau)^{2K+4}) - \tau G_t \tau.$$

From Theorem 9.7 and Lemma 9.10 we observe that $A_{K,t}$ is a smoothing operator of order 3 with size $\frac{1}{\sqrt{1+t}}$, and also $A_{K,t}$ is a smooth operator of order 1 with size $\frac{1}{1+t}$. Moreover, from (9.7) and (9.44) we conclude that

$$A_{K,t} = O(\frac{1}{1+t}) \colon H^s(M) \to H^{s+\frac{1}{2}}(M)$$

for all $s \in \mathbb{Z}$. Furthermore, from (9.41), we observe that

$$(\overline{P}'_4 + t + \pi)(\tau G_t \tau + \tau A_{K,t} \tau) = \tau + (\tau A_t \tau)^{2K+5}. \tag{9.46}$$

From (9.44), we see that

$$(\tau A_t \tau)^{2K+4} = O(1) \colon H^s(M) \to H^{s+K+2}(M)$$

for all $s \in \mathbb{Z}$. Moreover, from (9.7) and (9.42), we observe that

$$\tau A_t \tau = O(\frac{1}{1+t}) \colon H^s(M) \to H^{s-2}(M)$$

for all $s \in \mathbb{Z}$. Thus, $(\tau A_t \tau)^{2K+5} = O(\frac{1}{1+t}) \colon H^s(M) \to H^{s+K}(M)$ for all $s \in \mathbb{Z}$. Combining this with (9.46) yields the result. $\square$

Remark 9.13. It is easy to see that $A_{K,t}$ depends continuously on t in $L^2(M)$.

From now on, we identify the operator $(\overline{P}'_4 + t + \pi)^{-1} \colon \hat{\mathcal{P}} \to \hat{\mathcal{P}}$ with $\tau(\overline{P}'_4 + t + \pi)^{-1}\tau$. Thus $(\overline{P}'_4 + t + \pi)^{-1} \colon L^2(M) \to L^2(M)$. We can extend and identify this operator as follows.

Proposition 9.14. *$(\overline{P}'_4 + t + \pi)^{-1}$ can be continuously extended to $(\overline{P}'_4 + t + \pi)^{-1} \colon H^s(M) \to H^s(M)$ for every $s \in \mathbb{Z}$. Moreover, for every $K \in \mathbb{N}_0$ we have*

$$(\overline{P}'_4 + t + \pi)^{-1} - (\tau G_t \tau + \tau A_{2K,t} \tau) = O(\frac{1}{1+t}) \colon H^{-K}(M) \to H^K(M),$$

where $A_{2K,t}$ is as in Proposition 9.12.

Proof. Fix $K \in \mathbb{N}_0$ and let $A_{2K,t}$ and $R_{2K,t}$ be as in Proposition 9.12. Then

$$\tau G_t\tau + \tau A_{2K,t}\tau = (\overline{P}_4' + t + \pi)^{-1} + (\overline{P}_4' + t + \pi)^{-1}\tau R_{2K,t}\tau. \tag{9.47}$$

Note that $\tau R_{2K,t}\tau = O(\frac{1}{1+t})\colon H^{-s}(M) \to L^2(M)$ for all $s \in \mathbb{Z}$ with $|s| \le 2K$. By (9.7), $\tau G_t\tau + \tau A_{2K,t}\tau = O(\frac{1}{1+t})\colon H^s(M) \to H^s(M)$ for all $s \in \mathbb{Z}$. By (9.3), we observe that $(\overline{P}_4' + t + \pi)^{-1} = O(\frac{1}{1+t})\colon L^2(M) \to L^2(M)$. From these observations we conclude that we can extend to $(\overline{P}_4' + t + \pi)^{-1}$ to $H^{-s}(M)$ for all $s \in \mathbb{N}_0$ with $s \le 2K$; indeed

$$(\overline{P}_4' + t + \pi)^{-1} = O(\frac{1}{1+t})\colon H^{-s}(M) \to H^{-s}(M) \tag{9.48}$$

for all $s \in \mathbb{N}_0$ with $s \le 2K$. By taking the adjoint in (9.48), we conclude that we can extend to $(\overline{P}_4' + t + \pi)^{-1}$ to

$$(\overline{P}_4' + t + \pi)^{-1} = O(\frac{1}{1+t})\colon H^{s}(M) \to H^{s}(M) \tag{9.49}$$

for all $s \in \mathbb{N}_0$ with $s \le 2K$. From (9.47) and (9.49) we conclude that

$$(\overline{P}_4' + t + \pi)^{-1} - (\tau G_t\tau + \tau A_{2K,t}\tau) = O(\frac{1}{1+t})\colon H^{-K}(M) \to H^{K}(M). \qquad \square$$

This allows us to prove the following theorem.

Theorem 9.15. *There is a $G \in L^{-1}_{\mathrm{cl}}(M)$ such that $2GE_1 - I \in L_{\mathrm{cl}}(M)$ for $E_1 \in L^1_{\mathrm{cl}}(M)$ as in Theorem 9.1 and for every $\ell \in \mathbb{N}_0$,*

$$(\overline{P}_4')^{-\frac{1}{2}} = \tau G\tau + \tau A_\ell\tau + \tau R_\ell\tau$$

on $\hat{\mathcal{P}}$, where $A_\ell, R_\ell\colon C^\infty(M) \to \mathscr{D}'(M)$ are continuous operators, $R_\ell(x,y) \in C^\ell(M\times M)$, and A_ℓ is a smooth operator of order $3-\varepsilon$ for every $0 < \varepsilon < 1$.

Proof. Fix $\ell \in \mathbb{N}_0$ and take $K \gg \ell$. Put

$$\Xi_{2K,t} = (\overline{P}_4' + t + \pi)^{-1} - (\tau G_t\tau + \tau A_{2K,t}\tau),$$

where $A_{2K,t}$ is as in Proposition 9.12. By Proposition 9.14, $\Xi_{2K,t}$ is well-defined as a continuous operator $H^s(M) \to H^s(M)$ for every $s \in \mathbb{Z}$. Observe that $\Xi_{2K,t} = \tau\Xi_{2K,t}\tau$. From Lemma 9.2 we see that

$$(\overline{P}_4')^{-\frac{1}{2}} = c\int_0^\infty t^{-\frac{1}{2}}\tau G_t\tau dt + c\int_0^\infty t^{-\frac{1}{2}}\tau A_{2K,t}\tau dt + c\int_0^\infty t^{-\frac{1}{2}}\tau\Xi_{2K,t}\tau dt. \tag{9.50}$$

It is known that (see [30])

$$c\int_0^\infty t^{-\frac{1}{2}}\tau G_t\tau dt = \tau G\tau, \tag{9.51}$$

where $G \in L^{-1}_{\mathrm{cl}}(M)$ with $2GE_1 - I \in L^{-1}_{\mathrm{cl}}(M)$.

We claim that

$$\Xi(x,y) := (c\int_0^\infty t^{-\frac{1}{2}}\Xi_{2K,t}dt)(x,y) \in C^\ell(M\times M) \tag{9.52}$$

if K is large enough. Fix $k \in \mathbb{N}_0$. For every $m \in \mathbb{N}$, consider

$$\Xi_{k,m} := c\sum_{j=1}^m \frac{1}{m}\Xi_{2K,k+\frac{j}{m}}\frac{1}{\sqrt{k+\frac{j}{m}}}.$$

It is clear that, in $L^2(M)$,

$$\lim_{m\to\infty}\Xi_{k,m}=c\int_k^{k+1}t^{-\frac{1}{2}}\Xi_{2K,t}dt. \tag{9.53}$$

By Proposition 9.14, we see that

$$\|\Xi_{k,m}\|_{\mathscr{L}(H^{-K}(M),H^K(M))}\leq c_1\sum_{j=1}^m\frac{1}{m}\frac{1}{1+k+\frac{j}{m}}\frac{1}{\sqrt{k+\frac{j}{m}}}\leq c_1\int_k^{k+1}\frac{1}{(1+t)\sqrt{t}}dt, \tag{9.54}$$

where $c_1>0$ is a constant and $\|\Xi_{k,m}\|_{\mathscr{L}(H^{-K}(M),H^K(M))}$ denotes the standard operator norm of $\Xi_{k,m}$ in $\mathscr{L}(H^{-K}(M),H^K(M))$. From (9.54) and the Sobolev embedding theorem, if $K\gg\ell$, there is a subsequence (m_s) such that $m_s\to\infty$ as $s\to\infty$,

$$\lim_{s\to\infty}\Xi_{k,m_s}(x,y)=\Xi_k(x,y) \tag{9.55}$$

in $C^\ell(M\times M)$, and

$$\|\Xi_k(x,y)\|_{C^\ell(M\times M)}\leq\widetilde{c}_1\int_k^{k+1}\frac{1}{(1+t)\sqrt{t}}dt, \tag{9.56}$$

where $\widetilde{c}_1>0$ is a constant independent of k. From (9.53), (9.55) and (9.56), we conclude that

$$\begin{aligned}&\Xi_k(x,y)=(c\int_k^{k+1}t^{-\frac{1}{2}}\Xi_{2K,t}dt)(x,y)\in C^\ell(M\times M),\\&\left\|c\int_k^{k+1}t^{-\frac{1}{2}}\Xi_{2K,t}dt)\right\|_{C^\ell(M\times M)}\leq\widetilde{c}_1\int_k^{k+1}\frac{1}{(1+t)\sqrt{t}}dt.\end{aligned} \tag{9.57}$$

Since $\sum_{k=0}^\infty\int_k^{k+1}\frac{1}{(1+t)\sqrt{t}}dt=\int_0^\infty\frac{1}{(1+t)\sqrt{t}}dt<\infty$, we deduce that

$$\Xi(x,y)=(c\int_0^\infty t^{-\frac{1}{2}}\Xi_{2K,t}dt)(x,y)=\sum_{k=0}^\infty\Xi_k(x,y)\in C^\ell(M\times M),$$

as claimed.

From now on, we take K large enough so that $\Xi(x,y)\in C^\ell(M\times M)$. Put $A:=c\int_0^\infty t^{-\frac{1}{2}}A_{2K,t}dt$. We now study the kernel of A. Fix $x_0,y_0\in M$ and set $\vartheta(x_0,y_0)=r$. Put

$$B_{x_0}(\frac{r}{4})=\left\{z\in M;\,\vartheta(z,x_0)<\frac{r}{4}\right\},\quad B_{y_0}(\frac{r}{4})=\left\{z\in M;\,\vartheta(z,y_0)<\frac{r}{4}\right\}.$$

Take $\chi\in C_0^\infty(B_{x_0}(\frac{r}{4}))$ and $\chi_1\in C_0^\infty(B_{y_0}(\frac{r}{4}))$ such that $\chi=1$ near x_0 and $\chi_1=1$ near y_0. Consider $\widetilde{A}:=c\int_0^\infty t^{-\frac{1}{2}}\chi A_{2K,t}\chi_1dt$. Then,

$$\widetilde{A}=c\int_0^{r^{-4}}t^{-\frac{1}{2}}\chi A_{2K,t}\chi_1dt+c\int_{r^{-4}}^\infty t^{-\frac{1}{2}}\chi A_{2K,t}\chi_1dt. \tag{9.58}$$

For every $m\in\mathbb{N}$, consider

$$B_m=c\sum_{j=1}^m\frac{r^{-4}}{m}(\chi A_{2K,\frac{j}{m}r^{-4}}\chi_1)(\frac{j}{m}r^{-4})^{-\frac{1}{2}}.$$

It is easy to see that, in L^2,

$$\lim_{m\to\infty} B_m = c\int_0^{r^{-4}} t^{-\frac{1}{2}}\chi A_{2K,t}\chi_1 dt. \tag{9.59}$$

Recall from Proposition 9.12 that $A_{2K,t}$ is a smoothing operator of order 3 with size $\frac{1}{\sqrt{1+t}}$. From this and (9.59), we have that, for any $x \in B_{x_0}(\frac{r}{4})$, $y \in B_{y_0}(\frac{r}{4})$,

$$\begin{aligned}
|B_m(x,y)| &\le c\sum_{j=1}^m \frac{r^{-4}}{m}\left|(\chi A_{2K,\frac{r^{-4}j}{m}}\chi_1)(x,y)\right|(\frac{r^{-4}j}{m})^{-\frac{1}{2}}\\
&\le c\sum_{j=1}^m \frac{r^{-4}}{m}\frac{1}{\sqrt{1+\frac{r^{-4}j}{m}}}\vartheta(x,y)^{-1}(\frac{r^{-4}j}{m})^{-\frac{1}{2}}\\
&\le c_2\vartheta(x,y)^{-1}\int_0^{r^{-4}}\frac{1}{\sqrt{1+t}}t^{-\frac{1}{2}}dt\\
&\le c_3\vartheta(x,y)^{-1}\left|\log\vartheta(x,y)\right|,
\end{aligned}$$

where $c_2>0$, $c_3>0$ are constants independent of m, r, χ, χ_1, x_0, y_0. Similarly, for every $\alpha_1,\alpha_2\in\mathbb{N}_0$ and $\varepsilon>0$, there is a constant $C_{\alpha_1,\alpha_2,\varepsilon}$, independent of m, r, χ, χ_1, x_0, y_0, such that

$$\left|(\nabla_b)_x^{\alpha_1}(\nabla_b)_y^{\alpha_1}B_m(x,y)\right| \le C_{\alpha_1,\alpha_2,\varepsilon}\vartheta(x,y)^{-1-|\alpha_1|-|\alpha_2|-\varepsilon}. \tag{9.60}$$

From (9.60), we deduce that there is a subsequence (m_s) such that $m_s\to\infty$ as $s\to\infty$ for which $B_{m_s}(x,y)$ converges to some $B(x,y)$ in the $C^\infty(M\times M)$ topology with the property that for every $\alpha_1,\alpha_2\in\mathbb{N}_0$ and every $\varepsilon>0$, there is a constant $C_{\alpha_1,\alpha_2,\varepsilon}$, independent of m,r,χ,χ_1,x_0,y_0, such that

$$\left|(\nabla_b)_x^{\alpha_1}(\nabla_b)_y^{\alpha_2}B(x,y)\right| \le C_{\alpha_1,\alpha_2,\varepsilon}\vartheta(x,y)^{-1-|\alpha_1|-|\alpha_2|-\varepsilon}. \tag{9.61}$$

In particular, from (9.59) we have that

$$(c\int_0^{r^{-4}} t^{-\frac{1}{2}}\chi A_{2K,t}\chi_1 dt)(x,y) = B(x,y). \tag{9.62}$$

Fix $k\in\mathbb{N}_0$. For every $m\in\mathbb{N}$, consider

$$D_{k,m} := c\sum_{j=1}^m \frac{r^{-4}}{m}\chi A_{2K,r^{-4}k+\frac{j}{m}r^{-4}}\chi_1\frac{1}{\sqrt{r^{-4}k+\frac{j}{m}r^{-4}}}.$$

It is clear that

$$\lim_{m\to\infty} D_{k,m} = c\int_{r^{-4}k}^{r^{-4}(k+1)} t^{-\frac{1}{2}}\chi A_{2K,t}\chi_1 dt \tag{9.63}$$

in $L^2(M)$. Recall from Proposition 9.12 that $A_{2K,t}$ is a smoothing operator of order 1 with size $\frac{1}{1+t}$. From this observation, we find that for every $x\in B_{x_0}(\frac{r}{4})$,

$y \in B_{y_0}(\frac{r}{4})$, we have that

$$
\begin{aligned}
|D_{k,m}(x,y)| &\leq \widetilde{c}_1 \sum_{j=1}^{m} \frac{r^{-4}}{m} \left|(\chi A_{2K, r^{-4}k+\frac{j}{m}r^{-4}}\chi_1)(x,y)\right| (r^{-4}k + \frac{j}{m}r^{-4})^{-\frac{1}{2}} \\
&\leq \widetilde{c}_2 \sum_{j=1}^{m} \frac{r^{-4}}{m} \vartheta(x,y)^{-3} \frac{1}{1+r^{-4}k+\frac{j}{m}r^{-4}} (r^{-4}k + \frac{j}{m}r^{-4})^{-\frac{1}{2}} \qquad (9.64) \\
&\leq \widetilde{c}_2 \int_{r^{-4}k}^{r^{-4}(k+1)} \vartheta(x,y)^{-3} \frac{1}{1+t} \frac{1}{\sqrt{t}} dt,
\end{aligned}
$$

where $\widetilde{c}_1 > 0$, $\widetilde{c}_2 > 0$ are constants independent of k, m, r, χ, χ_1, x_0, y_0. Similarly, for every $\alpha_1, \alpha_2 \in \mathbb{N}_0$, there is a constant C_{α_1,α_2}, independent of $m, k, r, \chi, \chi_1, x_0, y_0$, such that

$$
\left|(\nabla_b)_x^{\alpha_1} (\nabla_b)_y^{\alpha_1} D_{k,m}(x,y)\right| \leq C_{\alpha_1,\alpha_2} \int_{r^{-4}k}^{r^{-4}(k+1)} \vartheta(x,y)^{-3-|\alpha_1|-|\alpha_2|} \frac{1}{1+t} \frac{1}{\sqrt{t}} dt.
$$

Therefore there is a subsequence (m_s) such that $m_s \to s$ as $s \to \infty$ for which $D_{k,m_s}(x,y)$ converges to some $D_k(x,y)$ in the $C^\infty(M \times M)$ topology with the property that for every $\alpha_1, \alpha_2 \in \mathbb{N}_0$ and every $\varepsilon > 0$, there is a constant $\widetilde{C}_{\alpha_1,\alpha_2,\varepsilon}$ such that

$$
\left|(\nabla_b)_x^{\alpha_1} (\nabla_b)_y^{\alpha_2} D_k(x,y)\right| \leq \widetilde{C}_{\alpha_1,\alpha_2,\varepsilon} \int_{r^{-4}k}^{r^{-4}(k+1)} \vartheta(x,y)^{-3-|\alpha_1|-|\alpha_2|-\varepsilon} \frac{1}{1+t} \frac{1}{\sqrt{t}} dt. \qquad (9.65)
$$

In particular, from (9.63) we find that

$$
(c \int_{r^{-4}k}^{r^{-4}(k+1)} t^{-\frac{1}{2}} \chi A_{2K,t} \chi_1 dt)(x,y) = D_k(x,y). \qquad (9.66)
$$

Note that for $x \in B_{x_0}(\frac{r}{4})$ and $y \in B_{y_0}(\frac{r}{4})$,

$$
\sum_{k=1}^{\infty} \int_{r^{-4}k}^{r^{-4}(k+1)} \vartheta(x,y)^{-3-|\alpha_1|-|\alpha_2|-\varepsilon} \frac{1}{1+t} \frac{1}{\sqrt{t}} dt \leq \hat{c}_0 \vartheta(x,y)^{-1-|\alpha_1|-|\alpha_2|-\varepsilon}, \qquad (9.67)
$$

where $\hat{c}_0 > 0$ is a constant. From (9.65), (9.66), and (9.67) we deduce that $(c \int_{r^{-4}}^{\infty} t^{-\frac{1}{2}} \chi A_{2K,t} \chi_1 dt)(x,y) \in C^\infty(M \times M)$ and for every $\alpha_1, \alpha_2 \in \mathbb{N}_0$ and $\varepsilon > 0$, there is a constant $\hat{C}_{\alpha_1,\alpha_2,\varepsilon}$, independent of r, χ, χ_1, x_0, y_0, such that

$$
\left|(\nabla_b)_x^{\alpha_1} (\nabla_b)_y^{\alpha_2} \Big(c \int_{r^{-4}}^{\infty} t^{-\frac{1}{2}} \chi A_{2K,t} \chi_1 dt\Big)(x,y)\right| \leq \hat{C}_{\alpha_1,\alpha_2,\varepsilon} \vartheta(x,y)^{-1-|\alpha_1|-|\alpha_2|-\varepsilon}. \qquad (9.68)
$$

From (9.58), (9.61), (9.62) and (9.68), we deduce that $A(x,y)$ satisfies the following differential inequalities when $x \neq y$: For every $\varepsilon > 0$ and every $\alpha_1, \alpha_2 \in \mathbb{N}_0$, there is a constant $C_{\alpha_1,\alpha_2,\varepsilon} > 0$ independent of x and y such that

$$
|(\nabla_b)_x^{\alpha_1} (\nabla_b)_y^{\alpha_2} A(x,y)| \leq C_{\alpha_1,\alpha_2,\varepsilon} \vartheta(x,y)^{-1-\varepsilon-|\alpha|} \qquad (9.69)
$$

for all $|\alpha| = |\alpha_1| + |\alpha_2|$.

Now, we prove that A satisfies the cancellation condition of order $3-\varepsilon$ for every $0<\varepsilon<1$. Let ϕ be a normalized bump function in $B(x,r)$. Then

$$\begin{aligned}&\|\nabla_b^\alpha A\phi\|_{L^\infty(B(x,r))}\\ &\le c\int_0^{r^{-4}} t^{-\frac{1}{2}}\left\|\nabla_b^\alpha A_{2K,t}\phi\right\|_{L^\infty(B(x,r))}+c\int_{r^{-4}}^\infty t^{-\frac{1}{2}}\left\|\nabla_b^\alpha A_{2K,t}\phi\right\|_{L^\infty(B(x,r))}.\end{aligned}\tag{9.70}$$

Since $A_{2K,t}$ is a smoothing operator of order 3 with size $\frac{1}{\sqrt{1+t}}$, we have that

$$\int_0^{r^{-4}} t^{-\frac{1}{2}}\left\|\nabla_b^\alpha A_{2K,t}\phi\right\|_{L^\infty(B(x,r))}\le c_2 r^{3-|\alpha|}\left|\log r\right|,\tag{9.71}$$

where $c_1>0$ and $c_2>0$ are constants independent of r. Since $A_{2K,t}$ is also a smoothing operator of order 1 with size $\frac{1}{1+t}$, we have

$$\int_{r^{-4}}^\infty t^{-\frac{1}{2}}\left\|\nabla_b^\alpha A_{2K,t}\phi\right\|_{L^\infty(B(x,r))}\le \hat{c}_1 r^{1-|\alpha|}\int_{r^{-4}}^\infty t^{-\frac{1}{2}}\frac{1}{1+t}dt\le \hat{c}_2 r^{3-|\alpha|},\tag{9.72}$$

where $\hat{c}_1>0$ and $\hat{c}_2>0$ are constants independent of r. From (9.70), (9.71) and (9.72), we deduce that A satisfies the cancellation condition of order $3-\varepsilon$ for every $0<\varepsilon<1$. Similarly, A^* satisfies the cancellation condition of order $3-\varepsilon$ for every $0<\varepsilon<1$. The conclusion follows from (9.69). □

Now let us consider $2\Delta_b+\frac{1}{2}R$ extended to $L^2(M)$ in the standard way. Since $2\Delta_b+\frac{1}{2}R$ is hypoelliptic with loss of one derivative,

$$2\Delta_b+\frac{1}{2}R\colon \operatorname{Dom}(2\Delta_b+\frac{1}{2}R)\to L^2(M)$$

has closed range, is self-adjoint, and $\operatorname{Ker}(2\Delta_b+\frac{1}{2}R)$ is a finite-dimensional subspace of $C^\infty(M)$. Let $\hat{N}\colon L^2(M)\to\operatorname{Dom}(2\Delta_b+\frac{1}{2}R)$ be the partial inverse and let $p\colon L^2(M)\to\operatorname{Ker}(2\Delta_b+\frac{1}{2}R)$ be the orthogonal projection. Then p is a smoothing operator on M and we have

$$\begin{aligned}&\hat{N}(2\Delta_b+\frac{1}{2}R)+p=I\quad\text{on } \operatorname{Dom}(2\Delta_b+\tfrac{1}{2}R),\\ &(2\Delta_b+\frac{1}{2}R)\hat{N}+p=I\quad\text{on } L^2(M).\end{aligned}$$

Note that $\hat{N}\colon H^s(M)\to H^{s+1}(M)$ for all $z\in\mathbb{Z}$. Moreover, $\hat{N}$ is a smoothing operator of order 2 (see [23, Section 10] and [31]).

Proposition 9.16. *With the notations above, $\tau G\tau-\tau\hat{N}$ is a smoothing operator of order 3, where $G\in L^{-1}_{\mathrm{cl}}(M)$ is as in Theorem 9.15.*

Proof. From Theorem 8.1 and Theorem 9.15, we have that

$$(\tau G\tau)(\tau(2\Delta_b+\frac{R}{2})\tau)=\tau+\tau P_{-1}\tau-\tau G(I-\tau)(2E_1+\frac{R}{2})\tau,\tag{9.73}$$

where $P_{-1}\in L^{-1}_{\mathrm{cl}}(M)$.

We claim that

(9.74) $\tau P_{-1}\tau$ is a smoothing operator of order 2,

(9.75) $\tau G(I-\tau)(2E_1+\frac{R}{2})\tau$ is a smoothing operator of order 1.

From Theorem 7.1 and Lemma 8.3, we have that

$$\tau P_{-1}\tau \equiv SP_{-1}S+\overline{S}P_{-1}\overline{S}. \tag{9.76}$$

From Lemma 8.2 and Lemma 8.3 we have that

$$\begin{aligned} SP_{-1}S \equiv S\overline{N}\,\overline{\Box}_bP_{-1}S &= S\overline{N}\Box_bP_{-1}S+S\overline{N}L_1P_{-1}S \\ &= S\overline{N}[\Box_b,P_{-1}]S+S\overline{N}L_1P_{-1}S, \end{aligned} \tag{9.77}$$

where L_1 is a first order partial differential operator. From the symbolic calculus of Stein–Yung [31], we check that $[\Box_b,P_{-1}]S$ and $L_1P_{-1}S$ are smoothing operators of order 0. From this observation, (9.77) and Theorem 9.7, we conclude that $SP_{-1}S$ is a smoothing operator of order 2. Similarly, $\overline{S}P_{-1}\overline{S}$ is a smoothing operator of order 2. From (9.76), we obtain (9.74).

Again, from Theorem 7.1, Lemma 8.3 and Lemma 8.2, we have that

$$\begin{aligned} &\tau G(I-\tau)(2E_1+\frac{R}{2})\tau \\ &\equiv SG(I-S)(2E_1+\frac{R}{2})S+\overline{S}G(I-\overline{S})(2E_1+\frac{R}{2})\overline{S} \\ &\equiv SG\overline{\Box}_b\,\overline{N}N\Box_b(2E_1+\frac{R}{2})S+\overline{S}G\Box_bN\overline{N}\,\overline{\Box}_b(2E_1+\frac{R}{2})\overline{S} \\ &= S[G,\Box_b]\overline{N}N\overline{\partial}_b^*[\overline{\partial}_b,2E_1+\frac{R}{2}]S+SGL_1\overline{N}N\overline{\partial}_b^*[\overline{\partial}_b,2E_1+\frac{R}{2}]S \\ &\quad+\overline{S}[G,\overline{\Box}_b]N\overline{N}\partial_b^*[\partial_b,2E_1+\frac{R}{2}]\overline{S}+\overline{S}G\overline{L}_1N\overline{N}\partial_b^*[\partial_b,2E_1+\frac{R}{2}]\overline{S}, \end{aligned} \tag{9.78}$$

where L_1 is a first order partial differential operator. From the symbolic calculus of Stein–Yung [31], we check that $\overline{N}N\overline{\partial}_b^*[\overline{\partial}_b,2E_1+\frac{R}{2}]S$, $N\overline{N}\partial_b^*[\partial_b,2E_1+\frac{R}{2}]\overline{S}$ are smoothing operators of order 1 and $S[G,\Box_b]$, SGL_1, $\overline{S}[G,\overline{\Box}_b]$, $\overline{S}G\overline{L}_1$ are smoothing operators of order 0. From this observation, (9.78) and Theorem 9.7, we obtain (9.75).

Now, from Theorem 7.1, Lemma 8.3, Lemma 8.2 and recall that $\Delta_b=\Box_b+\overline{\Box}_b$, we have that

$$\begin{aligned} (\tau(2\Delta_b+\frac{R}{2})\tau)\hat{N} &\equiv \tau-\tau(2\Delta_b+\frac{R}{2})(I-\tau)\hat{N} \\ &\equiv \tau-S(2\Delta_b+\frac{R}{2})(I-S)\hat{N}-\overline{S}(2\Delta_b+\frac{R}{2})(I-\overline{S})\hat{N} \\ &= \tau-S(\overline{\Box}_b+\frac{R}{2})\Box_bN\hat{N}-\overline{S}(\Box_b+\frac{R}{2})\overline{\Box}_b\,\overline{N}\hat{N} \\ &\equiv \tau-S[L_1+\frac{R}{2},\overline{\partial}_b^*]\overline{\partial}_bN\hat{N}-\overline{S}[\overline{L}_1+\frac{R}{2},\partial_b^*]\partial_b\overline{N}\hat{N}, \end{aligned} \tag{9.79}$$

where L_1 is a first order partial differential operator. From the symbolic calculus of Stein–Yung [31], we check that $[L_1+\frac{R}{2},\overline{\partial}_b^*]\overline{\partial}_bN\hat{N}$ and $[\overline{L}_1+\frac{R}{2},\partial_b^*]\partial_b\overline{N}\hat{N}$ are smoothing operators of order 1. From this observation, (9.79) and Theorem 9.7, we obtain that

$$(\tau(2\Delta_b+\frac{R}{2})\tau)\hat{N}=\tau+H, \tag{9.80}$$

where H is a smoothing operator of order 1. From (9.73) and (9.80), we find that

$$\tau G\tau+(\tau G\tau)H=\tau\hat{N}+(\tau P_{-1}\tau)\hat{N}-\tau G(I-\tau)(2E_1+\frac{R}{2})\tau\hat{N}. \tag{9.81}$$

We can repeat the proof of (9.74) and deduce that $\tau G\tau$ is a smoothing operator of order 2 and hence

$$(\tau G\tau)H \text{ is a smoothing operator of order 3.} \tag{9.82}$$

From (9.74), (9.75), (9.81) and (9.82) we deduce that $\tau G\tau - \tau\hat{N}$ is a smoothing operator of order 3. □

Fix a point $\zeta \in X$. The Green's function of $(\overline{P}'_4)^{\frac{1}{2}}$ at ζ is given by

$$G_\zeta := (\overline{P}'_4)^{-\frac{1}{2}}\tau\delta_\zeta\tau \in \mathscr{D}'(M). \tag{9.83}$$

It is easy to see that

$$(\overline{P}'_4)^{\frac{1}{2}}G_\zeta = \delta_\zeta - \pi(x,\zeta) \text{ on } \mathcal{P}. \tag{9.84}$$

Note that $\pi(x,\zeta) \in C^\infty(M) \cap \operatorname{Ker}(\overline{P}'_4)^{-\frac{1}{2}}$.

Proof of Theorem 1.3. Fix $\zeta \in M$ and let (z,t) be CR normal coordinates defined in a neighborhood of ζ such that $(z(\zeta),t(\zeta)) = (0,0)$. For $m \in \mathbb{R}$, let $\mathcal{E}(\rho^m)$ be as in the discussion before Theorem 1.3. Let $\ell_0 \in \mathbb{N}_0$ and fix $\ell \gg \ell_0$. From Theorem 9.15 and Proposition 9.16, we have

$$\begin{aligned} G_\zeta &= \tau G\tau\delta_\zeta\tau + \tau A_\ell\tau\delta_\zeta\tau + \tau R_\ell\tau\delta_\zeta\tau \\ &= \tau\hat{N}\delta_\zeta\tau + \tau K\delta_\zeta\tau + \tau A_\ell\tau\delta_\zeta\tau + \tau R_\ell\tau\delta_\zeta\tau, \end{aligned} \tag{9.85}$$

where K is a smoothing operator of order 3. Since $R_\ell(x,y) \in C^\ell(M\times M)$, we can take ℓ large enough so that

$$R_\ell\tau\delta_\zeta \in C^{\ell_0}(M). \tag{9.86}$$

Since K is a smoothing operator of order 3,

$$K\delta_\zeta \in \mathcal{E}(\rho^{-1}). \tag{9.87}$$

From Theorem 9.7 and Theorem 9.15 we see that $A_\ell\tau$ is a smoothing operator of order $3-\varepsilon$, for every $0<\varepsilon<1$. Hence,

$$A_\ell\tau\delta_\zeta \in \mathcal{E}(\rho^{-1-\varepsilon}) \tag{9.88}$$

for all $\varepsilon > 0$.

Finally, we consider $\hat{N}\delta_\zeta$. It is clear that $\hat{N}\delta_\zeta$ is the Green's function of $2\Delta_b + \frac{1}{2}R$. It was shown in [10, Section 5] that, near ζ, $\hat{N}\delta_\zeta$ has the form

$$\hat{N}\delta_\zeta(z,t) = \rho(z,t)^{-2} + \omega_0 \tag{9.89}$$

for some $\omega_0 \in C^1(M)$. Moreover, repeating the method in [23, Section 10], we conclude that

$$\omega_0 \in \mathcal{E}(\rho^{-\varepsilon}) \tag{9.90}$$

for all $\varepsilon > 0$. The conclusion follows from (9.85), (9.86), (9.87), (9.88), (9.89) and (9.90). □

In the proof of Theorem 4.2, we need the following result.

Theorem 9.17. *For every $\ell \in \mathbb{N}_0$, we have*

$$\tau B_\ell\tau\overline{P}'_4 = \tau + \tau C_\ell\tau \quad \text{on } \hat{\mathcal{P}},$$

where $B_\ell, C_\ell\colon C^\infty(M) \to \mathscr{D}'(M)$ are continuous operators, B_ℓ is a smoothing operator of order $4-\varepsilon$ for all $0<\varepsilon<1$, and $(\tau C_\ell\tau)(x,y) \in C^\ell(M\times M)$.

Proof. In view of (2.2), we see that $\overline{P}'_4 = \tau(4\Delta_b^2 + L_2)\tau$, where $L_2 = \nabla_b^2 + \nabla_b + r$, $r \in C^\infty(X)$. Let H be a parametrix of $4\Delta_b^2 + L_2$. Then $H\colon H^s(M) \to H^{s+2}(M)$ for every $s \in \mathbb{Z}$ and H is a smoothing operator of order $4 - \varepsilon$ for every $0 < \varepsilon < 1$. From Theorem 7.1 and Lemma 8.3, we have that

$$\begin{aligned} \tau H \tau \overline{P}'_4 &= (\tau H \tau)(\tau(4\Delta_b^2 + L_2)\tau) \\ &= \tau - \tau H(I-\tau)(4\Delta_b^2 + L_2)\tau - F_0 \\ &= \tau - SH(I-S)(4\Delta_b^2 + L_2)S - \overline{S}H(I-\overline{S})(4\Delta_b^2 + L_2)\overline{S} - F_1, \end{aligned} \tag{9.91}$$

where F_0 and F_1 are smoothing operators on M. Put

$$\Upsilon = SH(I-S)(4\Delta_b^2 + L_2)S + \overline{S}H(I-\overline{S})(4\Delta_b^2 + L_2)\overline{S} + F_1. \tag{9.92}$$

Note that $\Upsilon = \tau\Upsilon\tau$. Repeating the procedure in (9.79), we conclude that

$$\begin{aligned} SH(I-S)(4\Delta_b^2 + L_2)S &= SHN\overline{\partial}_b^* Q_2 S, \\ \overline{S}H(I-\overline{S})(4\Delta_b^2 + L_2)S &= \overline{S}H\overline{N}\partial_b^* \widetilde{Q}_2 \overline{S}, \end{aligned} \tag{9.93}$$

where $Q_2, \widetilde{Q}_2 \in L^2_{\mathrm{cl}}(M)$. From (9.92) and (9.93), we conclude that $\Upsilon\colon H^s(M) \to H^{s+\frac{1}{2}}(M)$ for all $s \in \mathbb{Z}$ and Υ is a smoothing operator of order 1. Fix $K \in \mathbb{N}$. Put

$$B_K := (\tau H \tau)(\tau + \Upsilon + \Upsilon^2 + \cdots + \Upsilon^K).$$

Then, B_K is a smoothing operator of order $4 - \varepsilon$ for all $0 < \varepsilon < 1$. From (9.91), we have that

$$B_k \overline{P}'_4 = \tau - \Upsilon^{K+1}.$$

Since $\Upsilon^{K+1}\colon H^s(M) \to H^{s+\frac{K+1}{2}}(M)$ for every $s \in \mathbb{Z}$, given $\ell \in \mathbb{N}_0$, we can take K large enough so that $\Upsilon^{K+1}(x,y) \in C^\ell(M \times M)$. The theorem follows. □

In the proof of Theorem 4.2, we also need the following result.

Theorem 9.18. *Let $w \in L^2(M)$. If $\Delta_b w \in L^2(M)$, then there is a constant $c > 0$ such that $e^{c|w|^2} \in L^1(M)$.*

To prove Theorem 9.18, we need the following Adams-type theorem of Fontana and Morpurgo [12].

Theorem 9.19. *Let $A\colon L^2(M) \to L^2(M)$ be a continuous operator with distribution kernel $A(x,y) \in C^\infty(M \times M \setminus \operatorname{diag}(M \times M))$. Suppose that the kernel $A(x,y)$ satisfies*

$$\begin{aligned} &\sup_{x \in M} |\{y \in M\colon\ |A(x,y)| > s\}| \leq K s^{-2}, \\ &\sup_{y \in M} |\{x \in M\colon\ |A(x,y)| > s\}| \leq K s^{-2} \end{aligned} \tag{9.94}$$

as $s \to \infty$, where $K > 0$ is a constant and

$$|\{y \in M\colon\ |A(x,y)| > s\}|, \quad |\{x \in M\colon\ |A(x,y)| > s\}|$$

denote the volumes of the sets $\{y \in M\colon\ |A(x,y)| > s\}$ and $\{x \in M\colon\ |A(x,y)| > s\}$, respectively with respect to the given volume form on M. Then, for any $f \in L^2(M)$ with $Tf \in L^2(M)$, there is a constant $c > 0$ such that $e^{c|f|^2} \in L^1(M)$.

Proof of Theorem 9.18. Put $g := (\Delta_b + I)w \in L^2(M)$. Let Q be the inverse of $\Delta_b + I$. Then, $w = Qg$. It is known that (see [10, Section 2] and [23, Section 10])

$$|Q(x,y)| \lesssim \vartheta(x,y)^{-2}. \tag{9.95}$$

From (9.95), one readily checks that

$$\begin{aligned} &\sup{}_{x\in M} |\{y \in M;\, |Q(x,y)| > s\}| \lesssim s^{-2},\\ &\sup{}_{y\in M} |\{x \in M;\, |Q(x,y)| > s\}| \lesssim s^{-2}, \end{aligned} \tag{9.96}$$

as $s \to \infty$. The conclusion follows from (9.96) and Theorem 9.19. $\square$

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